

HOME CINEMA

HIGH-PERFORMANCE SOUND & VISION

Choice



TOTALLY KLIPSCH

Reference Dolby Atmos system aims high, p58

AMP WITH X-FACTOR

Denon's stunning AVR-X4500H receiver raises the bar for home cinema sound

GO LARGE!
SONY AND EPSON
4K PROJECTORS

REVIEWS:

NAD Masters Series processor
Pioneer UHD Blu-ray player
IOTA power amp
Amazon Echo Sub

Better than ever!

2001: A Space Odyssey kicks off our 4K classics roundup

INSIDE BUYER'S GUIDE → DOLBY CINEMA → READER'S SYSTEM → KEF → JBL SYNTHESIS PRO INSTALL → IS DVD DEAD? → COMPETITIONS → MORE!

XMAS!
25 AV treats to buy for yourself

FILM & TV

- M:I – FALLOUT
- STAR TREK DISCOVERY
- ANT-MAN & THE WASP
- SICARIO 2 ■ OCEAN'S 8
- THE FIRST PURGE

www.homecinemachoice.com

ISSUE 293 XMAS 2018 £4.99
AUS - \$13.50 NZ - \$14.99 CAN - \$17.00



31



Listen. Think. Answer.

The World's Number One OLED TV Brand

Now with Advanced ThinQ AI Technology



Perfect Colour | Perfect Black | Alpha 9 Processor | Dolby Atmos® Sound | ThinQ AI TV



LG OLED TV AI ThinQ®

Discover more: lg.com/uk/lgoled
Model Shown: E8

HOME CINEMA Choice

www.homecinemachoice.com

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor Mark Craven
mark.craven@homecinemachoice.com
Deputy Editor Anton van Beek
anton.vanbeek@homecinemachoice.com
Art Editor John Rook

CONTRIBUTORS

Steve May, John Archer, Tekura Maeva, Jon Thompson,
Rik Henderson, Steve Withers, Ed Selley
Photography Mike Prior

ADVERTISING

Advertising Sales Executive

Richard Morris
Mob: 07834 346461
E-mail: richard.morris@homecinemachoice.com

MARKETING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK: New, Renewals and Enquiries
Tel: 0344 243 9023
E-mail: help@hcc.secureorder.co.uk
USA & CANADA:
Toll Free: 001 866 647 9191
REST OF WORLD: New, Renewals and Enquiries
Tel: +44 (0) 1604 828 748
BACK ISSUES
www.mags-uk.com

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Group Editor Paul Miller, paul.miller@avtechmedia.co.uk
Group Sales Manager Sonia Smart
Subscriptions Manager Kate Hall
Chief Executive Owen Davies

Published by AVTech Media Ltd

Suite 25, Eden House, Enterprise Way
Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF
Tel: 0844 412 2262
From outside the UK: +44 (0) 1689 869 840

Distributed in the UK by Marketforce UK Ltd

BACKGROUND WALL IMAGES:

©STOCK.ADOBE.COM
©SHUTTERSTOCK.COM
©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM



Home Cinema Choice, ISSN 1359-6276, is published monthly with an additional issue in May by AVTech Media Ltd, a division of MYTIMEMEDIA Ltd, Suite 25, Eden House, Enterprise Way, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF, UK. The US annual subscription price is \$600 (equivalent to approximately 980USD). Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431, US Postmaster: Send address changes to Home Cinema Choice, Worldnet Shipping Inc, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at CDS GLOBAL Ltd, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE10 6EP. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.



If you can't always find a copy of this magazine, help is at hand! Complete this form and hand in at your local store, they'll arrange for a copy of each issue to be reserved for you. Some stores may even be able to arrange for it to be delivered to your home. Just ask!

Subject to availability

Please reserve/deliver my copy of Home Cinema Choice on a regular basis, starting with issue:

Title _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone number _____

If you don't want to miss an issue



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE: December 20, 2018



2001: A Space Odyssey 4K, p21

Welcome

I think it's now safe to say that Ultra HD Blu-ray is here to stay, and as the format gets comfortable, it's beginning to spread its wings. You'll find evidence of that this issue in both Pioneer's wilfully premium



UDP-LX800 player (see p46) and the expanding back-catalogue movie library (see p20). 4K is moving beyond high street-friendly hardware and new-release blockbusters.

The 4K outing for Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* is possibly the format's crowning achievement. Not only has care been lavished here on the sci-fi flick's startling widescreen visuals, ensuring **this 50-year-old movie looks sensational**, the original six-track audio has been re-commissioned for home cinema, and Warner Bros's three-disc release comes in fan-pleasing, pride-of-place packaging. It feels like a template is being set here that all studios should follow when it comes to classic content.

Editor

Mark Craven



MENU



CONTRIBUTORS



John Archer:
The experienced TV tester cut his teeth as an early HCC staffer



Jon Thompson:
Film producer and post-production expert delves into Hollywood and AV



Steve May:
HCC's former Ed. is one of the UK's most respected AV journo



Martin Pipe:
Technical expert Martin is renowned throughout the industry



Richard Stevenson:
Former Editor of the UK CE trade journal ERT



Ed Selley:
Audiophile Ed mixes his home cinema passion with a love of vinyl



Vincent Teoh:
Professional video calibrator writes about technology and tweaking

FEATURES

In-depth interviews and special reports. Starts... p20

COVER STORY

20 Back with a bang!

From *2001* to *Rambo*, Team HCC rounds up the latest back-catalogue UHD Blu-rays

COVER STORY

28 Slip a cable under the tree for me

Wondering what to splash your cash on this Xmas? Let our festive wishlist be your guide

32 Synthesis of sound

This state-of-the-art movie den combines powerful sonics with innovative design

36 Storm's brewing

Go inside an award-winning cinema room

SELECT

The place to look if you're planning to buy some new AV gear. Starts... p109

109 Gear guide

HCC's comprehensive Top 10s/15s list only the very best kit money can buy

BULLETIN

The place for hot products, trends and technology. Starts... p7

07 LSX appeal

Compact wireless speakers from KEF

08 E for evolution

Polk updates its Signature Series speakers

09 Dolby Cinema lands in the UK

Odeon brings its HDR/Atmos cinema system to London's West End

10 Stereo better than a 'bar

KEF explains why it believes you should stick to separate speakers for your TV

12 4K TV ends year on a high

Ultra HD flatscreen sales keep on rising, but the jury is out on 8K

14 Always bet on Black

The hunt is on when *The Predator* hits 4K, Blu-ray and DVD in January

16 Back of the 'net

Trailers, tech and more to check out online

REGULARS

Whether you want our opinions or your own, here's where to look. Starts... p73

73 Digital Copy

Mark Craven worries about disc detritus

74 Film Fanatic

Is it really the end of the road for DVD?

76 In the Mix

Dolby Cinema delights Jon Thompson

80 Feedback

Share your thoughts with other AV addicts

86 Certified: AV-Holic

Another HCC reader shows off their system

122 AV Avenger

Steve May is an unabashed AVR evangelist

COMPETITIONS

84 Great Blu-rays to be won!

The Time Tunnel: The Complete Series, *Kin*, *When a Stranger Calls* and *The Meg*



42

'The balance between deep bass, sledgehammer mid-range and sparkling detail is instantly apparent'



46



54



58

REVIEWS

With a focus on performance, these are in-depth tests you can trust... p41

COVER STORY

42 Denon AVR-X4500H

Nine-channel AVR that bristles with features and connectivity, and packs the performance punch to match

46 Pioneer UDP-LX800

Universal Ultra HD Blu-ray player lays claim to the high-end crown

COVER STORY

50 Sony VPL-VW270ES

The Big S is back with a new entry-level 4K HDR projector

54 NAD M17 V2

Modular upgrades add essential skills to NAD's Masters Series processor

58 Klipsch Reference 5.1.2

US speaker brand brings its horn-loaded tweeters to the Dolby Atmos party

COVER STORY

62 Epson EH-TW7400

LCD projector isn't native 4K, but its upscaling talents still impress

66 IOTAVX AVXPI

Affordable seven-channel Class AB power amplifier provides an effective upgrade



68 Amazon Echo Sub

6in woofer designed to boost the bottom end of your smart speaker setup

70 JBL Tune600BTNC

Wireless on-ear noise-cancelling cans with a focus on value for money

70 iBox Ellipsis

Low-cost Alexa speaker wants a plug socket and nothing else

PLAYBACK



The latest Blu-rays, DVDs and videogames reviewed and rated. Starts... p91

92 Ant-Man and the Wasp [4K]

93 Star Trek: Discovery – Season One
Hotel Transylvania 3
The First Purge [4K]
Ocean's 8 [4K]

94 Mission: Impossible – Fallout [4K]

96 Red Dead Redemption II
Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again
The Expanse: Season Two
Doctor Who: Twice Upon a Time [4K]

97 Sicario 2: Soldado [4K]

98 Mandy
The Case of the Bloody Iris
Leave No Trace
Tag
An Evening with Beverly Luff Linn

100 Batman: The Complete Animated Series

101 Jackie Chan's Project A & Project A Part II;
Invention for Destruction; Daisies; Distant
Voices, Still Lives; Operation Red Sea

102 William Castle at Columbia: Volume One

105 Long Weekend; Rats: Night of Terror;
Ash vs Evil Dead: The Complete Third
Season

106 Chilling Adventures of Sabrina: Season
One; Jamestown: Seasons 1-2

marantz®



Satisfaction Guaranteed



FREE 5 Year Warranty

For a limited period, Marantz is offering owners of a select range of our premium AV Receivers an extended 5 Year Warranty. This offer is only valid for the Marantz SR7013, SR8012, AV7705 and AV8805, which must be bought from an authorised Marantz retailer in Europe, between October 1st, 2018, and March 31st, 2019.

Find out more at: www.marantz.eu/5years

because music matters

BULLETIN

→ **NEWS HIGHLIGHTS** POLK Floorstanding Signature Series gets an 'E' update
DOLBY CINEMA First next-gen theatre to open in London this Christmas **4K TV** UK sales to tip 50 per cent by end of year **AT THE PLEX** This month's cinema releases **NEWS X10** Hot news stories in bite-sized chunks **THE PREDATOR** Sci-fi sequel hunts down 4K Blu-ray & **MORE!**

LSX appeal

KEF LSX → www.kef.com

Promising 'all the convenience and connectivity of the connected world, but with the emotion and detail of true high-resolution stereo,' KEF's LSX active speaker system arrives this month priced £1,000. Use either Bluetooth or UPnP/DLNA Wi-Fi to stream music, or digital optical audio for a flatscreen TV hookup, and perhaps add a subwoofer via the pre-out connection for a 2.1 performance that the brand believes knocks the soundbar competition into a cocked hat. See p10 for more...

HCC ONLINE...

For breaking AV news, blogs, features and reviews visit www.homecinemachoice.com
 Follow us on Twitter @hccmag
 Like us on Facebook
facebook.com/homecinemachoice

E for evolution

Polk Audio Signature E Series → en.polkaudio.com



Polk Audio has updated its Signature Series range. Now dubbed Signature E and pledging 'big surround sound', the lineup of three floorstanders, two centre enclosures (including the slim S35e) and three bookshelf models features improved drive units, new crossover designs and revised bass ports. All speakers are available in Black Washed Walnut or Winter White finishes, with prices reaching £1,000-per-pair for the S60e tower, which partners its terylene dome tweeter with a trio of 6.5in midbass drivers.

Fyne, Fast and Furious?



Fyne Audio has announced its F3 Series of subwoofers.

The range has

a focus on affordability, with the junior 8in model (F3-8) selling for just £300; 10in and 12in versions are priced at £400 and £600 respectively. Front-firing designs with down-firing ports, power comes via Class D 'DDX' amplifiers, with ratings kicking off at 300W for the F3-8. Onboard DSP enables automatic dynamic range management, overload protection and a Bass Boost function. www.fyneaudio.com

Bamboo-zled by music



Denon's AH-D9200 headphones take flagship status in its over-ear range, with every pair claiming a unique appearance as each earcup is crafted

from 'hand-picked' bamboo, chosen both for style and its acoustic properties. 50mm FreeEdge drivers with neodymium magnets reside within, while memory foam earpads and a leather headband are used to deliver long-term comfort. The £1,400 cans ship with 3m/6.35mm and 1.2m/3.5mm cables, and a hard storage case. www.denon.co.uk

Playlist...

Team HCC spins up its disc picks of the month

Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (UHD Blu-ray)

Intense HDR10/Dolby Vision encodes and barnstorming DTS:X sonics combine to deliver a 4K Blu-ray platter with plenty of bite.



Children of Men (Region B BD)



Arrow Academy revisits Alfonso Cuarón's breathtaking dystopian thriller on BD and throws in some excellent new bonus features.

Nightmare Beach (Region B BD)



88 Films serves up a seriously good looking hi-def presentation of Umberto Lenzi's entertaining Spring Break slasher.

Lucifer: Season Three (R2 DVD)



It may not be out on Blu-ray here, but this fantastical crime series is still a devilishly fun watch on DVD.

Whitney (Region B BD)



This absorbing and candid look at Whitney Houston's troubled life and career is well worth a spin.



Dolby Cinema lands in UK

Odeon chooses Leicester Square multiplex to debut HDR/Atmos system

The wait for a Dolby Cinema in the UK should be over by the end of the year as the Odeon Leicester Square in London reopens after a multi-million pound refurbishment programme. Adopting the name Odeon Luxe Leicester Square, the West End cinema is being described as the chain's 'European flagship'.

Screen 1 (aka the Premiere Screen) has been given the Dolby Cinema makeover. The 800-seat venue will feature a Dolby Vision dual-laser projection system and Dolby Atmos audio. When it comes to Dolby Cinema titles available for the hoped-for pre-Christmas launch, expect *Mary Poppins Returns* to get the nod over *Aquaman*.

It's not just the AV that's been overhauled. Over 350 of the theatre's seats will be powered Luxe recliners. These promise 'extensive legroom, sumptuous comfort and personal tray tables,' says Odeon.

Screens 2-5 have also been updated, with other tweaks to the legendary venue include new lifts/escalators to fit a 'beautiful contemporary art deco design.'

'The building's famous heritage features have been lovingly restored including the Flying Ladies and original Compton organ in the

Premiere Screen, a breathtaking mirror wall created for the digital age, and auditorium doors that pay homage to decades of Royal and world premieres,' says Odeon. A new Oscar's Bar (named after founder Oscar Deutsch) will serve pre-movie drinks including champagne and cocktails, and offer views across Leicester Square from a glass-enclosed balcony. Sounds like a change from your local fleapit...

Premium rivals

Odeon Luxe Leicester Square – the first of a mini-wave of Dolby Cinemas from the chain, with seven in total scheduled to open across the UK – will offer the 'best movie experience available,' claims Mark Way, Managing Director of Odeon Cinemas Group. Yet it has its premium rivals, some just a stone's throw away. The former Empire Leicester Square, now owned by Cineworld, offers the capital's only IMAX Laser theatre. Cineworld has also introduced ScreenX technology from Korean corp CJ-CGV

(where projection extends to the side walls for a wraparound experience), installing it at its Greenwich, Leeds White Rose, Castleford, Didsbury and Speke locations.



The cinema has been closed since January

At the 'plex...

Heading out to see a flick?
Catch these this month

Creed II

November 30: Michael B. Jordan steps back into the ring as Adonis Creed in the latest *Rocky* spin-off, this time taking on the son of Ivan Drago – the man who killed his father, Apollo Creed, in *Rocky IV*. Even Dolph Lundgren (as Drago) returns to the franchise.

Aquaman

December 14: Fresh from hanging with Batman and chums in *Justice League*, DC's aquatic hero has his own solo movie – and based on the extended online preview released last month, we expect it to make a huge splash at the box office.

Mary Poppins Returns

December 21: Cor blimey! It just ain't a proper Christmas without Mary Poppins. Thankfully, this festive season Disney is giving audiences a brand-new sequel, with Emily Blunt cast in the title role.

Stereo better than a 'bar?

Stick to separate speakers for TV and music streaming, says KEF

British audio specialist KEF's new wireless speaker system – designed for music and AV – not only outperforms Alexa and Google audio systems, but challenges the appeal of soundbars, says the brand.

The LSX is essentially a compact version of the company's premium LS50 Wireless active speakers, with a fittingly downsized price tag – £1,000 compared to £2,000. Aside from power, the units can be used completely cable-free, both from the source and between each other, using proprietary wireless technology.

Consumers shouldn't be shortchanged by wireless single-box smart speakers, KEF European Marketing Director Michael Johnson told *HCC*. 'This wireless music system takes wireless stereo sound to the next level,' he said.

'If you walk into any studio in the world, you will see stereo loudspeakers,' adds Jack Oclew-Brown, the company's Head of Acoustics. 'That's how music is produced. If you want an audio product at home that gives you good reproduction, it should be stereo.'

Developed in collaboration with industrial designer Michael Young, the LSX is available in a choice of five colours, with matching drivers. All but the gloss white edition have a fabric finish from Danish textile manufacturer Kvadrat.

The LSX uses a 4in version of KEF's Uni-Q driver, featuring a 0.75in aluminium tweeter in the centre of a 4in midbass.

A Music Integrity Engine DSP engine is used to enhance bass response, although if you feel the need for a deeper bass performance there's scope for a 2.1 configuration, using the LSX's pre-out connection to an optional sub.

Velvet smooth

HCC had an early preview of the system, and noted extreme clarity with a velvet smooth mid-range. Class D amplification, rated at 2 x 100W, along with dedicated DACs, makes for an exciting listen. Adjustable EQ settings are available via the KEF control app.

Connections include dual-band Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4.2 with aptX, plus app-based Spotify Connect and Tidal music service support. For stereo TV installations, there's an optical digital input, plus a 3.5mm aux input for a local music player or smart device. The small form factor allows the speakers

to be placed either side of a TV on conventional furniture. The LSX is also DLNA/UPnP compliant, allowing users to play music files from a NAS. AirPlay 2 compatibility is due early 2019, and will enable the use of multiple LSX speakers in different rooms as well as integration with Siri.

Hi-res compatibility runs to 192kHz/24-bit, although sources are downsampled to 96kHz/24-bit if the speakers are tethered using an Ethernet cable, or 48kHz/24-bit when a pure wireless connection is employed.

The speakers feature 4in midbass and 0.75in HF drivers in a Uni-Q array



Optoma delivers all-in-one 4K PJ

LED-based UHL55 adds wireless hookups, speakers and voice control to UHD images

Launching at £1,500, Optoma's boxy UHL55 projector claims to be an AV everyman, partnering 4K projection with consumer-friendly features.

LED illumination (claiming a 'lamp-life' of up to 30,000 hours and instant on/off) joins HDR10 and 3D playback on the video spec sheet. Twin HDMI 2.0 inputs handle 4K sources, with Optoma's PureMotion processing tackling motion blur/judder. With no zoom offered, the projector's throw ratio is fixed at 1.2:1.

Additional features include Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connections – the latter enabling the PJ to

wirelessly link to external speakers and headphones (or a keyboard/mouse for PC activities). There's also an in-built stereo speaker system, plus a digital optical audio output to allow Dolby Digital 5.1 to be passed on to a home cinema setup. The UHL55 also packs a media player (with 4K support) and USB input.

Control is via a Bluetooth zapper, with additional interactivity possible through Amazon Alexa hardware. www.optoma.co.uk

Optoma's UHL55 uses LED illumination and claims an output of 2,000 Lumens



CEDIA MEMBER

NewWave

Home Cinema Rooms

Try Triad

Experience a truly immersive sound experience with Triad Gold & Dolby Atmos at our Kent Experience Centre



Complete Home Cinema Solutions



DUAL PURPOSE
CINEMA ROOMS



LIVING SPACE
CINEMA SYSTEMS



DEDICATED HOME
CINEMA ROOMS

We have expertise in designing and delivering all the elements required to create a great home cinema: design, construction, sound, projection, seating, lighting & finishes.

T: 01732 852 500

E: homecinema@newwaveav.co.uk

www.newwavehomecinema.co.uk

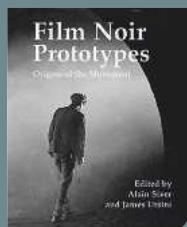


Visit our Tonbridge
demo suite

By appointment only

Extras...

Small items that could make a big impression...

Film Noir Prototypes

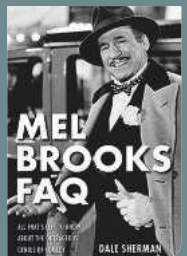
There have been countless books about the film noir genre, but this superb £20 tome

(edited by Alain Silver and James Ursini) takes a new approach, bringing together 20 scholarly essays examining the movement's antecedents in cinema, art and literature. The end result is as involving as it is refreshing in its approach to the genre – just be prepared to add a load of new titles to your 'must-see' movie list once you've read it.

Frightfest Guide: Ghost Movies

Who doesn't love a good ghost story to spice up the festive season? If you're having trouble

choosing one to watch, this £17 book has you covered, with genre expert Axelle Carolyn providing detailed analysis of some 200 spook-tacular titles, from 1921's *The Phantom Carriage* to 2018's *Winchester*.

Mel Brooks FAQ

The latest in Applause's ongoing series of FAQ guide books shines its light on the life and career of one of Hollywood's

greatest comic filmmakers. Packed with detailed breakdowns of all of Brooks' movies (right down to a Hitler reference counter for each of them), author Dale Sherman leaves no stone unturned and delivers a book that's well worth the £20 asking price.

4K TV ends year on a high

More than half the flatscreen market will be Ultra HD by the end of 2018

Sales of 4K TVs will end the year on a high, with UHD models accounting for more than half of all TVs sold, according to a report by market analyst Futuresource Consulting.

'We reckon it'll be up by 17 per cent in units this year, accounting for 55 per cent of the UK TV market – astonishing progress as models have been available for only six years,' Jack Wetherill, senior market analyst at Futuresource, told *HCC*. 'Anyone buying a set 40in upwards this Christmas will be assessing the 4K alternative to HD and whether the additional cost is worth the investment.'

The boom is backed up by industry stat giant GfK, which confirms a year-on-year growth of 40 per cent in volume and 25 per cent in value, based on TV sales data collected between January to August.

The rise is being put down to a combination of manufacturers migrating to 2160p panels, and the all-important upsurge in 4K content. 2018 has seen premium pay TV operators Sky and Virgin Media step up their 4K content game, to better combat UHD competition from OTT providers like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Apple and Rakuten.

UHD Blu-ray is also riding high. There are now around 30 new UHD titles a month being released in the 4K format.

Premium appetites

'Sales of 50in and larger 4K screens continue to perform very well,' explains Paul Hide of trade body TechUK. 'Worries that largescreen viewing will slowly decline, to be replaced by video content consumption via smartphones and tablets, are proving wrong. Yes, mobile viewing is on the rise, but it's in addition to, rather than instead of, the bigscreen home experience.'

And it appears it's not just budget 2160p screens finding an audience.



Paul Hide: 'Worries that largescreen viewing will slowly decline, to be replaced by tablets and phones, are proving wrong'

There's an appetite for premium upgrades, too. 'Development of screen technologies, larger screen sizes in compact frame formats and stunning designs are all contributing,' notes Hide.

Simon Peck, Head of Marketing at Currys PC World, says that Ultra HD TV sales are up 30 per cent. 'The 4K market has had a strong year with exciting events such as the World Cup and more services delivering higher-quality content,' he says. 'This has been supported with a greater range of largescreen panels unlocking lower prices on 55in, 65in and 75in units for consumers looking to upgrade.'

Industry jury still out on 8K

According to market research company IHS Markit, sales of 8K resolution TVs will total 430,000 in 2019, growing to 2 million units by 2020. 65in TVs are predicted to account for over half of the volume.

However, while some, such as Simon Peck, suggest that interest in 8K 'is building', not everyone is predicting a consumer rush towards the next-gen TV standard.

'8K isn't a term that most consumers will have heard yet,' states Futuresource's Jack Wetherill, 'although Samsung's recent launch of 65in and 75in models for £5,000 and £7,000 signals the start of a process that will see 8K make in-roads at the premium end.' Mass market volumes are a few years off, he suggests.

'8K has no consumer awareness in the UK and Europe, with the exception of a tiny minority of techies and early adopters,' agrees TechUK's Paul Hide. 'It's far too early to consider 8K as a commercially viable consumer offering.'

Arun Bhatoye, senior marketing manager for Hisense UK, concurs. 'While 8K is now a fixture at trade shows like IFA and CES, it's unlikely that this flexing of tech muscle will hit the mainstream consumer any time soon. We're looking at 4K's emergence as just about complete. 8K content is a long way away, meaning consumers are unlikely to invest in what will be pretty expensive tech.'

'I think, much more likely, is the continued refinement of 4K. HDR, wide colour gamut, local dimming and powerful motion technology are much more likely to be part of the next big trend in mainstream consumer TVs.'



Sets like Sony's ZF9 LCD TV are refining the 4K HDR experience

This month's top 10 news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...



1 Birthday treats from Elipson
French audio specialist Elipson is celebrating its 80th anniversary with Special Edition versions of its iconic, spherical Planet L speaker, Prestige Facet 8B speaker and Alpha 100 RIAA BT turntable. The two speakers boast enhanced crossovers using 'the highest-grade quality components available', while the turntable enhances its built-in phono stage. All three also feature a revamped black finish with gold trim.

2 Who needs colour TV?
Figures released by TV Licensing show that 7,161 UK households only have licences for watching black-and-white televisions. While this may seem high, the number of applications for black-and-white permits has dropped from a staggering 212,000 back in 2000. Intriguingly, TV Licensing doesn't carry out checks on households claiming to watch black-and-white sets, saying it is 'entirely done on trust.'

3 Cutting the cost of 4K HDR
Vivitek has slashed the price of its HK2288 4K HDR projector from £2,500 to just £1,500. The company's debut 4K beamer, the HK2288 grabbed an 'HCC Recommended' badge when we reviewed it at its original price in HCC #285 earlier this year.

4 Mu-so gets AirPlay update
Naim has added Apple AirPlay 2 to its Mu-so and Mu-so Qb wireless speakers with a new firmware update. The updated tech boasts direct streaming from other Apple devices and Siri voice control among its features. Users will need compatible Apple devices running iOS 11.4 or above.

5 Back to the '80s
Retro VHS-style Blu-ray packaging is clearly the in-thing right now. Following Universal and HMV's latest limited edition range of discs (see p30), Eureka has got in on the act with a Zavvi-exclusive limited edition reissue of the 1985 horror comedy *Fright Night*. In addition to the mock VHS packaging, it includes two postcards and a full-colour mini poster.

6 Top of the movie pops
The British Association for Screen Entertainment is partnering with the Official Charts Company on an Official Film Chart. A new Top Ten will be unveiled each Wednesday on OfficialCharts.com and is the first of its kind in the world to count movie downloads (from the likes of Amazon, iTunes, Sky Store, Virgin Media Store and Rakuten TV) alongside 4K, Blu-ray and DVD disc sales from high street and online retailers.

7 Disney+ to debut next year
Disney has confirmed that the long-rumoured Disney+ streaming service will launch in the US in 2019 – but there's no UK date announced yet. A number of exclusive *Star Wars* and Marvel TV shows have already been announced for the platform (see right for another one).

8 Making a difference
UK charity Together For Cinema has completed another project, this time in association with installer Knekt. Companies including Epson, Arcam and Monitor Audio donated hardware for the system that provides movie thrills for the young patients and their families at The Woodlands care facility.

9 8K is out of this world
Looking for native 8K footage? Head to <https://images.nasa.gov/details-First-8K-Video-from-Space.html> and you can download three glorious minutes of 8K material shot on the International Space Agency. Make sure you have space for the 3.1GB MP4 file, though.

10 Paramount wages 4K War
In a move that is sure to anger physical media fans and those yet to upgrade to an Ultra HD TV, Paramount has made director Byron Haskin's *War of the Worlds* available in 4K with Dolby Vision via iTunes. This Academy Award-winning 1953 sci-fi classic is notable for still never having been released on Blu-ray anywhere in the world, leaving the 2005 Special Collector's Edition DVD as the best available version until now.



Premiere...

What's happening in the world of TV and films...

Harley goes hardcore



Director Cathy Yun has announced that her upcoming *Birds of Prey* will be the first 'R-rated' DCEU movie. Due for release in 2020, the film sees Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) joining forces with Huntress (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) and Black Canary (Jurnee Smollett-Bell) to save Gotham City.

Smallscreen heroes

Marvel heroes Falcon (Anthony Mackie) and the Winter Soldier (Sebastian Stan) are teaming up for a new live-action TV series being produced for the Disney+ video-on-demand service. In other Marvel TV news, Netflix has pulled the plug on its *Iron Fist* and *Luke Cage* superhero shows.

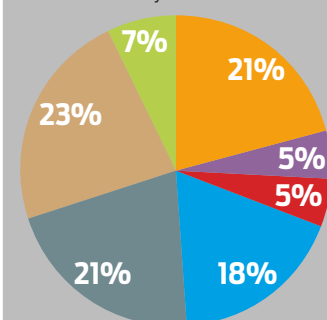
Watching Pratchett

BBC America has greenlit an eight-episode series based on Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels. *The Watch* will tell all-new stories about the misfit City Watch, and will feature popular characters such as Sam Vimes, Angua and Death.

We asked...

Which is your favourite Mission: Impossible film?


■ *Mission: Impossible*
■ *M:I-2*
■ *M:I:III*
■ *Ghost Protocol*
■ *Rogue Nation*
■ *Fallout*
■ I don't like any of them



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

Always bet on Black

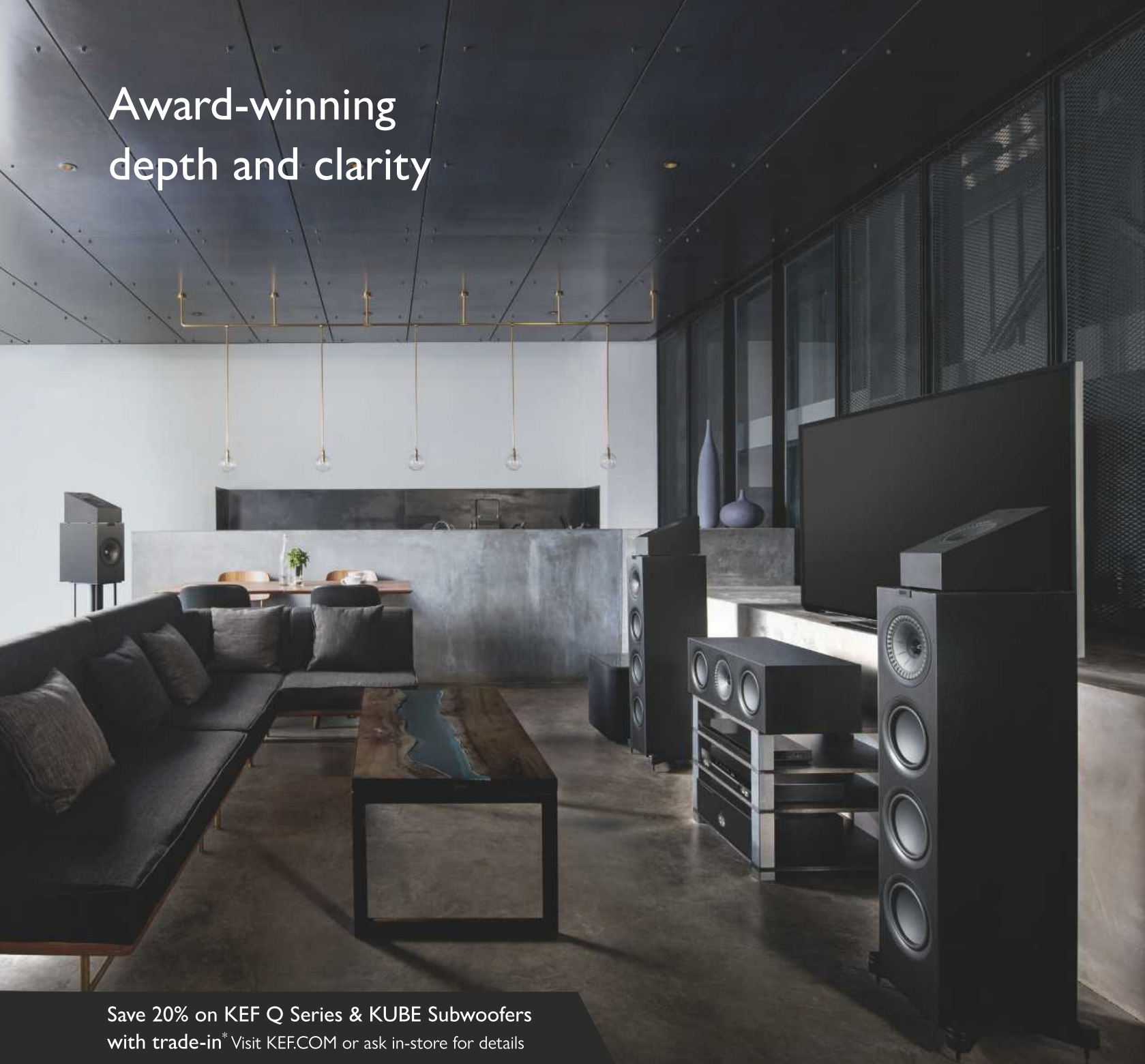
The Predator → Twentieth Century Fox → DVD/Blu-ray/Ultra HD Blu-ray



Having played one of the alien big-game hunter's victims in the 1987 original, acclaimed filmmaker Shane Black returns to the world of *Predator*, co-writing and directing the latest instalment in the explosive sci-fi-action franchise. You can hunt down *The Predator* on DVD, Blu-ray and 4K Ultra HD (either by itself, or as part of a '4-Movie Collection') from January 28, where it'll be joined by deleted scenes and four behind-the-scenes featurettes. As is often the case with Fox releases, the 4K platter boasts an exclusive Dolby Atmos soundmix.



Award-winning depth and clarity



Save 20% on KEF Q Series & KUBE Subwoofers
with trade-in* Visit [KEF.COM](https://www.kef.com) or ask in-store for details

The Q Series hi-fi speakers

KEF's Q Series has been judged the best Home Theatre Speaker System 2018-2019 by EISA. The notoriously picky judges were blown away by the Q Series' ability to deliver an incredibly immersive wrap-around sound stage, the precision of the latest iteration of the Uni-Q driver array when it comes to crystal clear treble and midrange information, and the depth and clarity of the bass. When combined with stylish, well-crafted cabinets and the Dolby Atmos-enabled Q50a up-firing speaker and a dedicated centre channel the judges concluded the Q Series offered "Unbeatable Home Cinema Sound".



[KEF.COM](https://www.kef.com)

*Terms & conditions apply - visit [kef.com](https://www.kef.com) for details

KEF

OBSESSED WITH HIGH RESOLUTION

Face to Face

Topics of discussion on the HCC Facebook page

Will you watch Die Hard this Christmas?



Watch it? I'll be in it!

Steve Jasper

How can I not? It's the greatest Christmas movie of all time, despite what Bruce says.

Chris Lally

No way.

David Ganderton

Ho Ho Ho. Yes! Like every year!

Robert Corrigan

Absolutely. Every year along with Home Alone.

Krzysztof Pabich

What you're watching on your home cinema...



Films? Don't you know Red Dead Redemption II is out now?

Barrie Head

Starting to work my way through the William Castle at Columbia: Volume One Blu-ray boxset.

First up: The Tingler.

Ian Smith

I've booked Skyscraper and Sicario 2: Soldado on my PS app. My Saturday night ritual – two movies and fish 'n' chips.

Cliff Inglis

The Patriot UHD and The Apostle on Netflix. Should be done for about 2:30am!

Moninder Sahota

The First Purge, Thor: Ragnarok, Spider-Man: Homecoming, Black Panther and Infinity War – all in 3D where available.

Gary Marshall

I have so many purchases that I have to catch up on. I'm suspecting either Ant-Man and The Wasp or one of the recent Kino Lorber/Touchstone catalogue titles.

Home Video Geek

Join in the fun



Like our page at facebook.com/HomeCinemaChoice

Back of the 'net

Trailers, technology and more to check out on the web



It's snow joke

In 2017 Liam Neeson threatened to stop making action movies – perhaps new film *Cold Pursuit* (arriving in cinemas in February) doesn't count because, judging from the trailer at least, it has its tongue slightly in cheek. Wanna see Neeson as a Rocky Mountain snowplow driver tackling drug dealers?

youtu.be/ugEyB58pFaU



Chat to your telly

LG has added Google Assistant support to its 2018 'AI' TV range (both OLED and LCD models), enabling smart home control, calendar scheduling, etc, through the remote mic. Panasonic, meanwhile, has added voice interaction via Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant devices to its own 2018 sets.

www.lg.com/uk / www.panasonic.co.uk



Take to the skies

How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World finally arrives in cinemas in February 2019, five years since its predecessor grabbed more than \$500m at the box office. DreamWorks/Universal will be hoping for more big business from this 'toon that finds Hiccup and Toothless searching for a mythical place...

youtu.be/acDHTkslk2w



ALIEN (1979)

From Wings to The Last Jedi

This clip montage from YouTuber Burger Fiction collects sequences from every Academy Awards Best Visual Effects winner, beginning in 1928. It's a fascinating look at how the art form has developed, and a great reminder of some flicks you may have forgotten about.

youtu.be/ZSD6VFUVbsQ



TOP PICK

Please rewind

The Marvel Studios juggernaut keeps rolling next March as *Captain Marvel* lands with Brie Larson in the title role. The presence of a Blockbuster Video shop in the trailer signifies this flick's 1990s setting, as does a digitally de-aged Samuel L. Jackson as a youthful Nick Fury. Trailer here:

youtu.be/Z1BCujX3pw8



Reality bytes

Professional system builders may be pleased to learn of new updates to Modus VR – the virtual reality platform for designing cinema rooms that launched this Summer. Tweaks include easier setup of non-rectangular spaces, hardware and furnishing additions and elevated seating.

www.modusvr.com

4K
ULTRA HD
8.3M PIXEL

BENQ W1700 EISA BEST BUY PROJECTOR 2018 - 2019



BenQ TK800



BenQ W1700



True 4K HDR for Grand Cinema & Sports Experience

True 4K UHD 8.3M Pixel Resolution
Hyper-Realistic Video Quality with Projector-Optimised HDR
Auto Vertical Keystone Correction

BenQ.co.uk

© 2018 BenQ Corp. Specification may vary by region, please visit your local stores for details. Actual product's features and specifications are subject to change without notice. This material may include corporate names and trademarks of third parties which are the properties of the third parties respectively.



Great Savings

when you **subscribe** to *Home Cinema Choice* today



13 issues **delivered to your door**

Great savings on the shop price

Download each new issue to your device

A **74% discount** on your Digital subscription

Access your subscription on multiple devices



13 issues **delivered to your door**

Great savings on the shop price

Never miss an issue



DIGITAL-ONLY SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE ONLINE...

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

SUBSCRIBE SECURELY ONLINE

 <http://hcc.secureorder.co.uk/HCC/HCCXMAS18P>

**SAVE 74%
ON DIGITAL
SUBSCRIPTIONS***
Offer ends
27th December
2018



IN EVERY ISSUE
Kit reviews,
movies and TV, installs,
accessories, insight,
opinion, competitions
+ more

CALL OUR ORDER LINE

0344 243 9023 (quote ref HCCXMAS18P)
Lines open Mon - Fri - 8.00am - 8.00pm GMT & Sat - 9.30am - 3.30pm GMT

UK Calls costs 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Overseas calls will cost more

DIRECT DEBIT SUBSCRIPTIONS UK ONLY

Yes, I would like to subscribe to Home Cinema Choice

☐ Print + Digital: £13.25 every 3 months

☐ Print: £10.99 every 3 months

YOUR DETAILS MUST BE COMPLETED

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..... Initial..... Surname.....

Address

Postcode Country

Tel Mobile.....

Email D.O.B

I WOULD LIKE TO SEND A GIFT TO:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..... Initial..... Surname.....

Address

Postcode Country

INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUR BANK/BUILDING SOCIETY

Originator's reference 422562



Name of bank.....

Address of bank.....

Postcode

Account holder.....

Signature..... Date

Sort code Account number

Instructions to your bank or building society: Please pay MyTimeMedia Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with MyTimeMedia Ltd and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Reference Number (official use only)

Please note that banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account.

CARD PAYMENTS & OVERSEAS

Yes, I would like to subscribe to Home Cinema Choice, for 1 year (13 issues) with a one-off payment

UK ONLY:

☐ Print + Digital: £56.00

☐ Print: £47.00

EUROPE & ROW:

☐ EU Print + Digital: £77.00

☐ EU Print: £68.00

☐ ROW Print + Digital: £77.00

☐ ROW Print: £68.00

PAYMENT DETAILS

☐ Postal Order/Cheque ☐ Visa/MasterCard ☐ Maestro

Please make cheques payable to MyTimeMedia Ltd and write code HCCXMAS18P on the back

Cardholder's name.....

Card no: (Maestro)

Valid from..... Expiry date..... Maestro issue no.....

Signature..... Date.....

Offer ends 27th December 2018. AV Tech Media collects your data so that we can fulfil your subscription. We may also, from time to time, send you details of AV Tech Media offers, events and competitions but you always have a choice and can opt out by emailing us at unsubscribe@homecinemachoice.com. Please select here if you are happy to receive such offers by email ☐ by post ☐ by phone ☐. We do not share or sell your data with/to third parties. Details you share with us will be managed as outlined in our Privacy Policy here <http://www.mytimemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy>.

**POST THIS FORM TO: HOME CINEMA CHOICE,
MY TIME MEDIA LTD, 3 QUEENSBRIDGE, THE LAKES,
NORTHAMPTON, NN4 7BF**



BACK WITH A BANG!

Film studios are raiding their vaults for back-catalogue titles to release on Ultra HD Blu-ray.

Mark Craven, Steve Withers and **John Archer** cast their eyes over a library ranging from classic sci-fi to 1980s action



We know 'real' is simply electrical signals interpreted by our brain... but the *Matrix* Trilogy 4K set does look real good

The Matrix Trilogy

Warner Bros.

The first film is an original, intelligent, cleverly shot sci-fi actioner, with a screenplay as precise as a Swiss watch. The sequels, not so much. Both *...Reloaded* and *...Revolutions* fall victim to excessive budgets, endless fight sequences, and some dodgy CGI. There's excellent action, but unfortunately it's diluted by all the philosophical mumbo jumbo.

The Matrix has been available on UHD for a while, so if you only want the first film buy that release. But if you're a fan of the sequels or an obsessive completist, you can now pick up a trilogy boxset in the UK (well, a slipcase with the three films packaged separately). Or you can import the titles separately.

All three discs use 4K scans of the original camera negatives, presented at 2.40:1. Images offer a significant improvement over the Blu-rays in terms of definition and refinement, especially the sequels, which also benefit from higher-resolution CGI; the final battle in the Zion docking bay just bursts with



fine detail. There's a layer of grain, as you would expect from productions shot in 35mm, although it's less pronounced on the second and third movies. HDR (and Dolby Vision) passes really add to the images, opening up the light range, while colours are also significantly improved, with the blues of the real world and the greens of the Matrix appearing more nuanced and less heavy-handed than on the 1080p platters.

Audio has been given the Dolby Atmos treatment, and the mixes deliver a solid karate kick to your speakers. These tracks are highly immersive, with effects zinging around the room in the bullet-time sequences. The sounds of the hovercraft moving around the tunnels are wonderfully immersive, there's a visceral feel to the fights, and the freeway chase is a sonic treat.

The 4K platters port over existing chat tracks: four on the first film, and two each for the sequels. A third disc in each package brims with extras. However, not all legacy material is included; fans of *The Animatrix* should hold on to the previous BD boxset.

2001: A Space Odyssey

Warner Bros.

Stanley Kubrick's sci-fi is one of the most influential films ever made, and retains its ability to dazzle fifty years after its release. The meticulous VFX stand up to scrutiny even in these days of CGI, and aside from some dodgy fashion there's little to betray the production's late '60s origins.

This UHD Blu-ray release is nothing short of spectacular, too. A brand-new 8K scan of the original 65mm camera negative forms the basis of the 4K image, which has been restored before applying an HDR (and Dolby Vision) grade that is highly effective. The 2.20:1 transfer is as pristine as a NASA clean room.

No matter how familiar you are with *2001*, this release is going to blow your mind. Kubrick's attention to detail is often astonishing, every shot is carefully designed and composed, and it's all there onscreen. Whether it's the utterly believable prehistoric sequences shot entirely on sound stages, the intricate model work, or the artful production design, it's like seeing the film for the first time.

Colour timing has also changed; it's more nuanced than before. Kubrick's use of colour is striking, almost abstract at times, and thanks to the disc's wider gamut his intentions are well presented. The earthy tones of the Dawn of Man sequence, the



almost monochrome look of the moon scenes, and the blood red of HAL's 'murder' are all beautifully rendered. The same goes for the HDR, which has been sympathetically applied to enhance the experience. Space is suitably black, but free of any crush. Against this, the brightly lit spaceships and planets are juxtaposed for high impact. The stargate sequence is more psychedelic than ever.

There are two audio options, both DTS-HD Master Audio. The first is the restored and remixed 5.1 track from 1999; the second is based on the 1968 6-track audio. The latter is probably the purist's choice, but they both beautifully deliver the film's minimal dialogue and classical score.

There's an airlock full of extras on a third disc, but none of them are new.



The set comes with a booklet, lobby cards and hardcover slip case



Cabin in the Woods



Lionsgate

Co-writers Drew Goddard and Joss Whedon deliver an effective homage to the genre in this

knowing, darkly funny 2012 horror. Lionsgate's 4K release is a visual improvement on the existing Blu-ray, particularly when it comes to colour saturation, although the cinematic 2K DI that this 4K transfer is presumably based on means detailing isn't light years ahead. A bigger lure for fans of the film will be the new Dolby Atmos soundmix (an upgrade from DTS-HD MA 7.1), which has a ball with the film's playful, creepy design and sounds routinely excellent.



Shutter Island



Paramount

Martin Scorsese conjures memories of his earlier *Cape Fear* remake in this 2010 thriller,

and it lands on 4K Blu-ray (in the UK at least – there's seemingly no US release on the horizon) with a dramatic, intense 2.40:1 image to go with the dramatic intense narrative. Paramount's previous Blu-ray release was always a PQ champ, but this Dolby Vision/HDR10 encode adds a layer of subtle contrast enhancement and noticeably richer textures that suit Scorsese's noirish style. Going against *Shutter Island*'s 4K debut is the lack of any new bonus material or aural upgrade – the mix is the same DTS-HD MA 5.1 track.



Robin Hood

Universal

Whether you watch the original theatrical cut or the extended cut (both available on this 4K Blu-ray, but with no new extras), *Robin Hood* never manages to live up to the Ridley Scott+Russell Crowe+historical legend hype. It has some decent action sequences, though.

Despite the 2010 vintage, it apparently received a 4K DI at some point, however this isn't always obvious in the 4K Blu-ray transfer. Detail levels are often superb – especially where there are exquisite royal robes to portray. However, grain levels are inconsistent, drifting from almost nonexistent in one shot to excessive in the next. There's even some occasional white dotting amid the fizzing. The use of HDR is hit and miss, too. Daylight scenes are lifelike and intense, but dark parts of the picture routinely have shadow detail crushed out of them.

The best thing about this re-release is the new DTS:X soundtrack. This adds height, scale and better placement to the Blu-ray's DTS-HD 5.1 mix, injecting the film with life that's sorely missing elsewhere. ➤



Studiocanal has enlisted illustrator Adrian Keindorf for the trilogy's new cover art

Rambo Trilogy

Studiocanal

John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) battles his own demons, plus freedom-threatening Soviets, in this trio of '80s movies that begins with the raw, nuanced *First Blood* and ends with the big-budget bombast of *Rambo III*. Studiocanal brings the movies to 4K BD, based upon new scans/restorations of original elements. Fans will be pleased.

Beginning at the end, *Rambo III* (1988) is possibly the most beautifully shot dumb action flick of all time. Lensed by debut director (but veteran second unit director) Peter McDonald, it plants Stallone's ruthless soldier amidst gorgeous 2.40:1 cinematography and high-value set design, skilfully brought to the fore by a 4K HDR encode that unearths more beauty. The night-time raid on the Soviet compound is delivered as a fine blend of detail-packed shadowed corridors and luminous lighting, while colours throughout have obvious lustre, particularly the frequent fireballs and the golden trappings of Rambo's Thai temple. Grain is fine, rarely becoming a distraction.

It's a similar story with *First Blood* (1982) and *First Blood Part II* (1985). Neither of these have the almost operatic scope of *Rambo III*'s cinematography, but these encodes are as efficient as John Rambo himself. Colour depth and vibrancy are improved,



while dark and bright elements feel more organic. Again, grain management is excellent, and the images have more solidity and depth than their 1080p counterparts.

Studiocanal hasn't retooled the existing DTS-HD MA 5.1 tracks for the trio into DTS:X or Atmos mixes, and all three show up the limitations of their theatrical Dolby Stereo incarnations. There's plenty of dynamic heft, but not the seamless FX steerage of modern fare.

Extras across the discs offer more enticement, particularly as the old Blu-rays were so lame in this regard, jettisoning bonus material found on US versions. Commentary tracks (two in the case of *First Blood*) make a welcome appearance on the 4K discs, while the new BDs are stacked with content. The main draws are a three-part 2018 *Rambo Takes the '80s* documentary, plus the numerous vintage featurettes. Some previous extras are MIA, but it's still a good selection.



Hook

Sony Pictures

There's enough Robin Williams/Dustin Hoffman magic to make Steven Spielberg's *Hook* (1991) a family favourite, and it's now set sail on UHD Blu-ray with a pleasing image. In particular, the addition of HDR is fantastic. The extra intensity it brings to Spielberg's beautifully lit sets is so spectacular it feels like you're seeing them for the first time. Colours have been artfully expanded too; the film's boldest saturations look richer and more dynamic, while gentler stuff like skin tones remains natural. Detail is another improvement over the HD Blu-ray.

Grain seems more elevated than feels entirely natural, however, a trait shared with some previous Sony remasters, and the newly minted Dolby Atmos audio isn't perfect either. Dialogue can sound thin, trebles a tad harsh, and it's very front heavy. On the other hand, the score is better blended into the action, the scale is greater, and this disc throws in 11 never-seen-before deleted scenes. That might lure you in.



3:10 to Yuma

Lionsgate



Revisited on 4K BD a decade after its BD debut, *3:10 to Yuma* doesn't quite provide a 'yee-ha!' moment,

partly because the original disc was so strong. Many of its copious extras (including director commentary and solid 20-minute *Making of...*) are ported to the 4K disc – the rest residing on the BD version – and the original 7.1 LPCM audio (yes, that was a thing in 2008) is upmixed to DTS:X. Both tracks are refined and evocative. The 4K encode mostly handles the 35mm film grain well, improves definition a touch and offers a brightness boost – but contrast can seem forced at times and there's a lack of consistency to its clarity.



Cliffhanger

Studiocanal



This fan-favourite Stallone actioner mixes the sublime (the opening scene) with the ridiculous (most

of the last act), and its 4K HDR presentation is also a bit hit and miss. Often the 2.35:1 image is noticeably rich in detail, but there's an occasional softness/smoothness (particularly evident in facial close-ups) and a blandness to the cinematography that brings the overall visual impression down a notch. Colour punch is most evident in the orange/red of a rescue helicopter, while HDR grading comes to the fore in daylight scenes featuring swathes of snow-capped peaks. Audio is DTS-HD MA 5.1 – Sony's US release has Atmos, though... ➤

A home cinema without compromise



CEDIA
AWARDS
2018

WINNER

Best Home Cinema
EMEA Level III

"We have a beautiful living room, but I think we've only been in it once, because we love our cinema so much! Cyberhomes gave us the best of everything: the look, sound and picture quality. It still blows my mind every time I go in."

– Homeowner, Hampshire

At Cyberhomes our home cinemas and smart home installations aren't just about the amazing 4K picture and immersive Dolby Atmos sound.

We can also implement the lighting, the seating, the room acoustic treatments, the intuitive control system from Savant, Crestron or Control4, and so much more.

To find out more details call **0333 344 3718** or visit www.cyberhomes.co.uk/hcc



CEDIA
MEMBER

SAVANT



Home cinema design and installation • Lighting control systems • Multi-room audio and video
Home automation • CCTV and security • Managed Wi-Fi networks • Climate control

0333 344 3718

hello@cyberhomes.co.uk

www.cyberhomes.co.uk



Prince of Darkness misses out on the soundtrack CD, but gets a Steelbook instead

John Carpenter...

Studiocanal

The main thing that elevates the B-movie narratives of John Carpenter's filmography is the director's visual flair. His masterful frame composition, CinemaScope photography and eye for an unusual setup add gravitas to storylines that, perhaps, would have fallen flat at the hands of someone else. Therefore the chance to get reacquainted with a quartet of his flicks in 4K HDR is hard to turn down, especially as *Escape from New York* (1981), *Prince of Darkness* (1987) and *They Live* (1988) – and to a lesser extent 1980's *The Fog* – have all had sketchy histories on UK home media.

The latter, Carpenter's attempt at a classic ghost story, is the best known of this foursome given UHD treatment (with DTS-HD MA 5.1 and LPCM 2.0 audio mixes) by Studiocanal. It's also the least visually appealing. The sumptuous animated menu screen (a pleasing feature on all these releases) gives way to a 2.35:1 image that's inconsistent. Dark interiors and exteriors frequently seem overshadowed, as always, but the HDR pass fails to bring much out of the pin-point light sources, resulting in a fairly muted experience. Daylight sequences, such as Chapter 5's procession planning, fare better, providing a more obvious hit in detailing and colour saturation; it's in these moments where *The Fog* makes a case for its UHD update, but there's a sense that not only has the format hit the limitations of the source, it could have looked better, and the swirling fog isn't immune to blocking artefacts either.

Kurt Russell stars as the eye-patch-wearing Snake Plissken in *Escape From New York*. The good news for fans of this exhilarating sci-fi/actioner is that the 4K HDR image is a step forward over that of *The Fog*. Contrast is expansive, with a pingy but naturalistic feel to lights, flames, street lamps and headlights, meaning Russell's night-time adventures across NYC



Studiocanal's John Carpenter wave packs two macabre horrors and two fun sci-fis



are easy to slip into. There are one or two moments of softness, but overall an abundance of picture info brings out the textures of faces, hair, metals and clothing, while colours and fleshtones appear spot on.

Satirical cult classic *They Live*, in which Roddy Piper's working class drifter battles insidious aliens taking over society, looks particularly peachy. The wide urban landscapes drip with detail, creating an image with a palpable sense of depth, and colours are warm, bright and impactful. Black levels are good, without problematic crush, and the monochrome sequences when our hero dons his super-spex are well balanced.

Apocalyptic horror *Prince of Darkness* (with Alice Cooper cameo!) is mostly cut from the same cloth. Another CinemaScope presentation, it dazzles with its strong colour palette and lifelike HDR grading in particular, while additional clarity benefits fine textures and the image's sense of dimensionality. Shadowed areas in the climactic church scenes offer plenty of detail. All told, it's a fine presentation, although a shot of the sun in the sky threw up noticeable blocking (on the 4K disc).

Studiocanal has worked hard to give the releases that 'definitive' feel. *The Fog*, *Escape from New York* and *They Live* are four-disc editions, with (most) extras found on a (second) BD, joined by soundtrack CDs. *Prince of Darkness*, meanwhile, ships without a CD, and is a Zavvi-exclusive Steelbook edition.

The 4K discs are free of extras, while the movie Blu-rays carry the commentary tracks (three in the case of *Escape from New York*, one on *They Live* and *Prince of Darkness*, and two on *The Fog*). All other bits are on the additional BD25 platters. Head first to the newly commissioned documentaries, all reaching around the 45-minute mark, then chew on archival goodies including original EPK featurettes, trailers, VFX breakdowns, deleted scenes, profiles, and more. Not having the chat tracks on the 4K platters is a bit of a downer, though. Was there really not the space? ➤

300 SERIES



SOURCE D'INSPIRATION...

l'au-delà du son



FOCAL | 300 SERIES

Add a new dimension to your music with the new 300 Series from Focal. This discreet, ingenious French design offers simple tool-free installation across a versatile range of high performance products for stereo, multi-channel and home cinema environments. Thanks to patented 'Flax' technology drivers and an adjustable aluminium/magnesium inverted dome tweeter, the 300 Series offers a unique and uncoloured listening experience that will give your home a whole new atmosphere.

Simplified integration by excellence

Focal U.K. - Southampton Road, Salisbury, SP1 2LN - 01722 426600 -

www.focal.com/300series

Superman: The Movie

Warner Bros.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No it's a super new UHD BD release of the granddaddy of comic book movies. Richard Donner's cinematic take on Superman is lovingly crafted, with Christopher Reeve perfectly cast as the Man of Steel.

The disc uses a new 4K restoration of the theatrical cut's 35mm negative, presented in the correct 2.40:1 aspect ratio. The image has more fine detail than the Blu-ray, but the late '70s photography uses a lot of filters, so there isn't a massive difference. There's also a fair amount of grain, which is understandable given the film's vintage and extensive use of opticals, but the HDR exaggerates it and those raised on a diet of pristine digital productions may find it objectionable.

However, the HDR grade, which is enhanced with Dolby Vision, also ensures that blacks are deep and peak whites blinding: just check out the reflective clobber worn by Brando and the rest of the Kryptonian ruling council. Those same outfits are clearly clipping on the Blu-ray, but the detail is all there on the 4K disc. Colours also impress, with comic book primaries that really pop during the third act, especially Superman's famous costume.

It's not just the picture that gets the super-powered treatment, Warner Home Video has rustled



up a brand-new Dolby Atmos soundtrack as well. This is a highly aggressive mix that makes full use of all the available channels to steer effects around the room. The

opening credits alone sound fantastic, as does Superman's first night on the job, and the film's climatic earthquake. The object-based heroics of the Atmos track make it our preferred choice, but devotees will be glad to learn there's also a new 5.1 mix based on the 6-track audio elements used for the film's original 70mm release.

An informative commentary track by producers Pierre Spengler and Ilya Salkind has been ported over to the 4K disc, but all other extras are on the included Blu-ray and none of them are new. It does feature the longer Special Edition of the film, but it's the same disc that was released nearly a decade ago. But don't let that put you off if you're a fan of *Superman: The Movie* – it's never looked or sounded better.



Warner's disc adds an Atmos remix to the restored 4K HDR visuals

Gene Hackman returned to the role of Lex Luthor in *Superman II* and *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*



American Psycho



Lionsgate

Hilarious and disturbing, this biting satire gives a new meaning to the phrase 'making a killing on Wall Street' and arrives on 4K disc with a restored 2.35:1 image that's as sharp as one of Patrick Bateman's knives. It's a night and day difference compared to the Blu-ray; reds are bloody, shadows inky black, and shirts bright white thanks to HDR and Dolby Vision.

A new Atmos mix delivers a surprisingly immersive experience considering the subject matter. All previous extras are on the 4K disc itself (a nice touch), and there's a fresh chat track from writer/director Mary Harron.



The Big Lebowski



Universal

Judging by the quality of its 4K release, Universal loves this Coen Brothers cult comedy as much as its fans do. The picture quality here is gorgeous. Richly coloured, beautifully clean, way sharper and more detailed than the HD Blu-ray and remastered for HDR with sensitivity. It's as if The Dude and his buds are there in your movie room.

The DTS:X mix prepared for the 4K disc is an enhancement on the previous DTS-HD track: clearer, with richer-sounding dialogue and greater ambience.

No new extras, but still an essential purchase.

Fast and Furious Trilogy

Universal

The films that started the *F&F* bandwagon crash onto 4K with transfers based on the 35mm camera negatives for the first two and an upscale of the 2K DI for the third. There's a definite boost in detail, along with a healthy sheen of grain, but it's HDR that really makes the difference, with the cars' glossy paint jobs popping off the screen and the night-time races showing deep blacks and bright street lights. The first two titles (*Fast & Furious*, *2 Fast 2 Furious*) look particularly impressive, and all three are free of any unwanted compression artefacts.

New DTS:X mixes deliver the vehicular mayhem with aggression. The original DTS-HD MA tracks weren't exactly subtle, but there's more muscle here, especially during the street races. Overhead channels are used sparingly, but effects are steered with precision. The 1080p discs, meanwhile, offer the same bonus bits as before ■





Signature E Series

Better Bass by design.



Polk's Patented Power Port® Technology

US Patents # 5517573 & 5809154

Power Port® is a combination of specially designed, carefully calculated funnel shaped components at the mouth of the port that channel and slow down the moving air when it exits the port by promoting laminar airflow. It uses an ingeniously compact design to mimic the properties of what would be a very long flared port opening, reducing air turbulence activation by 3dB, or 50% greater sound pressure level (SPL) at the low frequency tuning point.

Signature Sound Rewritten.

Experience the new Polk Signature E Series at your nearest retailer and hear what better bass can do for you.



EXPECT GREAT SOUND.

Learn more at polkaudio.com

Polk Audio is a DEI Holdings, Inc. Company. Polk Audio and Polk, are registered trademarks of Polk Audio, LLC. Polk. Expect Great Sound. is a trademark of Polk Audio, LLC.

Slip a cable under the tree for me...

With an eye on having something useful to unwrap on Christmas morning, **Team HCC** draws up a wishlist of AV accessories, movie memorabilia, software, books and more

Cabasse Pearl

Perhaps the ultimate stocking filler (although at 32cm round you'll need a big stocking), Cabasse's £2,600 Pearl is an active wireless speaker that claims an output equivalent to that of a Formula 1 car – 118dB. Making that possible is a 1,600W amplifier section for its triaxial (tweeter, mid, woofer) driver configuration – an innovation trickled down from the brand's flagship La Sphère model. An internal mic enables automated room calibration; source options include digital optical and analogue ports, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, with hi-res playback and integration with Cabasse's StreamControl multiroom system also on the menu.

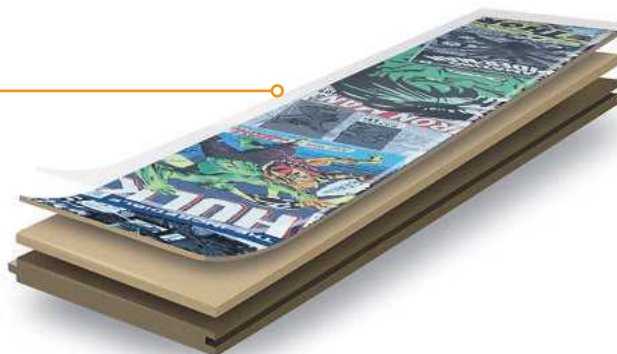
www.cabasse.com



Marvel-lous flooring

If you take the Marvel vs DC battle really seriously, pledge your allegiance to the former with this eye-catching HDF flooring from specialist brand Exklusiv. Printed with a collage of retro comic book covers, the 1.29m long boards fit together via 'Uniclic' installation. Pricing is £32m², with each pack culled at random from 35 unique compositions.

www.exklusivflooring.com



Panasonic DP-UB320

Proof that the still-young Ultra HD Blu-ray format has gone mass market can be found in Panasonic's DP-UB320, a 4K HDR disc-spinner that can be snaffled for as little as £130 following a pre-Christmas price cut. This compact player does away with the bonus features found on pricier rivals (it doesn't have a Wi-Fi connection, for instance, nor twin HDMI outputs) but employs Panasonic's familiar HCX processing silicon, and retains hi-res file support. www.panasonic.co.uk



Audiolab M-DAC Nano

This matchbox-sized wireless DAC/headphone amp is designed to improve your enjoyment of music when you're out and about. Connecting to smartphones and tablets (Android/Apple) via Bluetooth, it upsamples incoming data through its 32-bit/384kHz-capable DAC – while at the same time removing the need to have headphones wired into your smart device. The £150 M-DAC Nano also replenishes its eight-hour battery wirelessly thanks to a bundled Qi charging pad, and is supplied with a dinky carry pouch. www.audiolab.co.uk



Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K

Moving VOD duties away from a smart TV platform to a dedicated streamer is the best way to stay ahead of the curve. Amazon's latest Fire TV Stick supports 4K, HDR10+, Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos via a new quad-core 1.7GHz processor, yet still comes in at a bargain price of £50. Wi-Fi antenna technology has also been beefed up, and the bundled Alexa Voice Remote now offers simplified control over compatible hardware, such as TVs and soundbars. The Stick can also be paired with an Amazon Echo device, introducing hands-free voice control of its streaming skills. www.amazon.co.uk



Darth Vader's Castle

This Dark Side HQ, introduced in 2016 flick *Rogue One*, gets the LEGO treatment in an official set complete with TIE-Fighter and minifigures including the man himself and a pair of Royal Guards. Featuring 1,060 pieces and measuring over 40cm high, it'll give you plenty to do on Boxing Day. Details include a lava flow, Sith shrine and a hook for Vader's cape. Yours for £120. www.lego.com



Chord Company RumourX and ShawlineX

Treat your system to a refresh with new loudspeaker cabling. Two of specialist brand Chord Company's longest-running products have been given upgrades, adopting new XLPE (Cross-linked Polyethylene) insulation material. The RumourX (£18-per-metre) and ShawlineX (£30-per-metre, pictured) both feature silver-plated twisted pair conductors and can be purchased unterminated or pre-fitted with ChordOhmic banana plugs or ChordOhmic spade connectors at an additional cost. www.chord.co.uk



Airpulse A300

Bigger brother to the A200 system reviewed in HCC #285, Airpulse's A300 retains the hi-res-capable active stereo form factor but boosts onboard power to 2 x 70W, employs larger (6.5in) midbass drivers to complement the horn-loaded ribbon tweeters, and adds a USB input to the Bluetooth/optical/coaxial/aux roster. At £900, the A300 is a premium alternative to most stereo soundbars, but the reward is installation flexibility and a refined, robust sound performance. www.airpulseaudio.com

Ian Malcolm statue

Your movie room may have collectible Xenomorph and R2-D2 figures, but has it got *Jurassic Park*'s Dr. Ian Malcolm lounging around after a T-Rex attack with his shirt unbuttoned? Step forward Chronicle Collectibles' £480 1:4 scale replica... www.sideshowtoy.com

Numskull Designs Christmas Jumpers

Another year, another collection of film and pop culture-referencing jumpers to flaunt on Christmas Day (and never again). Numskull's range includes designs based on Batman, Superman, *Star Wars* and Harry Potter – the latter adding integrated LED lights for some extra festive twinkle. If you've got £35 to spend and can't live without a Yoda sweater ('The season to be Jolly, it is...') you're in luck. www.numskull.com/jumpers



1: The Art of Iron Man: 10th Anniversary Ed.

2008's *Iron Man* provided the foundations for the now 20-movie (and counting) Marvel Cinematic Universe. Titan Books' info-packed 208-page slip-cased hardback (£36) celebrates that film's visual flair, focusing on concept illustrations (including Iron Man's armour), storyboards and special FX.

2: Alien Covenant: David's Drawings

In the most recent addition to Ridley Scott's *Alien* franchise, pesky droid David gets up to all sorts of nefarious science. This fantastic £35 hardback package from Titan collects two books in a lush embossed slipcase, with the first presenting David's scientific sketches (only teased during the movie) in full detail, the second interviewing the artists responsible, Diane Hallett and Matt Hatton, and expanding on the meanings of the drawings.

3: Harryhausen: The Movie Posters

This gorgeous 192-page art book (again from Titan Books, priced £30) showcases the promotional poster art used around the globe for all of pioneering VFX guru Ray Harryhausen's feature film releases, from *Mighty Joe Young* in 1949 to 1981's *Clash of*

Blu-ray boxsets...



Zatoichi – The Blind Swordsman

Between 1962 and 1973, martial arts actor Shintaro Katsu starred as optically-challenged masseur/sword master Zatoichi in a series of 25(!) movies. All are collected here and digitally restored on Blu-ray by the Criterion Collection, and accompanied by the 1978 documentary *The Blind Swordsman*, interviews, trailers and a book. This nine-disc set retails for £150.



HMV VHS range

Following a Summer debut, HMV has expanded its lineup of collectible Blu-ray sets of classic movies masquerading as VHS releases – each title features the original VHS-era artwork, art cards and faux cassette packaging. All the films are Universal Pictures releases; the choice cuts from the second wave are *Jaws*, *Scarface* and *An American Werewolf in London*. Oh, and *Crocodile Dundee*.



William Castle at Columbia: Volume Two

This first William Castle boxset from Indicator is reviewed in this issue on p102, but there's already another volume prepped and ready for release on December 10. The director's 1960s' flicks *Zotz!*, *13 Frightened Girls*, *The Old Dark House* and *Trait-Jacket* are the focus this time, all joined by myriad extras including rare cuts, alternate scenes and interviews.



Planet of the Apes Trilogy 4K

The three movies in the recent *Planet of the Apes* reboot series starring Andy Serkis as Caesar (*Rise...*, *Dawn...*, *War*) have all had separate Ultra HD Blu-ray releases, but if you missed those first time around you can now grab the trilogy in boxset form – the £45 ticket saving money on the standalone prices too. The Full HD discs for each film are also included.



the *Titans*. The iconic B-movie imagery is accompanied by fascinating information about the films themselves.

4: Star Wars: The Complete Visual Dictionary

Although published under DK's 'Children' imprint, grown-up fans will also get a kick from

(and find easier to lift...) this mind-bogglingly detailed analysis of seemingly every creature (Mustafarian Lava Flea!), spacecraft (Firespeeder!) and techy gizmo (Bloggin-Oil Lamp!) from George Lucas's sci-fi saga. Over 1,500 images, supported by in-depth annotations, are crammed into its 352 pages. Hardback, priced £30.

5: Marvel Studios: Visual Dictionary

Another DK 'dictionary' (£23 approx), this time a more manageable 200 pages and with Marvel Studios' Hollywood blockbusters as its focus, up to and including *Avengers: Infinity War*. Lots of fan-serving detail here, illustrated via film stills and prop photography.

6: DC Comics: Absolutely Everything You Need to Know

This is more obviously aimed at junior superheroes, but with its attention on the comics themselves (rather than DC/Warner Bros's film series), there's plenty of sketch art to gawp at, and attention given to lesser-known characters. Priced £18.



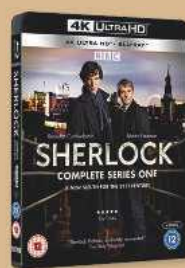
The Americans: The Complete Series

Matthew Rhys and Keri Russell play KGB spies posing as a suburban American married couple in this Emmy Award-winning US spy drama. All six seasons (running to 75 episodes) have been given a DVD boxset debut (there's no Blu-ray, unfortunately) courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox, with extras including behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes.



The Strain: The Complete Series

Based on the novels co-written by genre icon Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, and with del Toro serving as producer, the TV adaptation of apocalyptic horror drama *The Strain* ran from 2014 to 2017 on the US FX network. The first season earned a UK Blu-ray release but nothing followed – now, thankfully, all four are available as a DVD boxset.



Sherlock: Complete Series One 4K

The game is afoot for Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) and sidekick Dr. Watson (Martin Freeman) in the BBC's modern-day reimagining of Arthur Conan Doyle's much-loved sleuth. The three feature-length episodes of Series One are now available on UHD BD with DTS-HD MA 5.1 mixes; this four-disc set includes a *Making of...* doc and the original pilot.



The Very Best of Laurel & Hardy: 5 Film Collection

Stan and Ollie fans have been poorly served on Blu-ray in the UK, with only *The Flying Deuces* previously available. This triple-disc boxset from Universal Pictures, which collects *Block-Heads*, *Our Relations*, *Pardon Us*, *Sons of the Desert* and *Way Out West*, plus some of the comedy duo's shorts, is therefore welcome. Only £30, too.

Synthesis of sound

Mark Craven reports on a state-of-the-art cinema setup where potent sonics combine with innovative design





MINI MAYHEM
Ant-Man and the Wasp lands on Ultra HD Blu-ray p92

KIT CHECKLIST

JBL SYNTHESIS: 3 x SK2 3300 (left, centre, right); 2 x SCL4 (surround); 2 x SCL4 (rear); 6 x SCL4 (height); 2 x SIS 18in subwoofers
JBL SYNTHESIS: 7 x S820 power amplifiers (2 x 200W); 1 x S7165 seven-channel amplifier (7 x 160W); 1 x JBL SDP-75 HD processor; 2 x SDEC 4500 digital EQ modules
WOLF CINEMA: TXF5000 4K laser projector; ProScaler
ULTIMATE SCREENS: 4.2m-wide, 2.35:1 projector screen with lateral masking
KALEIDESCAPE: Strato 4K movie player
SKY: Sky Q
APPLE: Apple TV 4K
PANASONIC: DMP-UB900 4K Blu-ray player
CRESTRON: Control system

THE OWNER OF this premium movie room knew he wanted a JBL Synthesis speaker setup, having had one in a previous system. Here he's gone for the full monty – a 7.2.6 array – tasking installer Dawsons AV with designing a room that can make the 15 enclosures disappear (including the two 18in subwoofers) and sound their best.

The space itself brought some challenges; it had a marble tile floor and twin entrances, including a patio door. To overcome the first issue a room within a room was constructed using a timber frame topped with fabric panels. This gives the room both a unique styling and an acoustic leg up – although naturally full EQ/calibration was undertaken. Even more innovative are the motorized, sliding wall-sections that reveal the doors, easily controlled via a Crestron system linked to a tablet touchscreen interface.

Bring on the Wolf

JBL Synthesis processing, EQ and power is used – the latter including seven 2 x 200W stereo amplifiers – while a calibrated Wolf Cinema 4K laser projector crafts the largescreen visuals. The room's entire front-wall is filled by a 4.2m-wide screen. For sources, the owner can switch between Ultra HD Blu-ray, 4K downloads from a Kaleidescape system, Sky Q and Apple TV, plus legacy hardware including a LaserDisc player ■

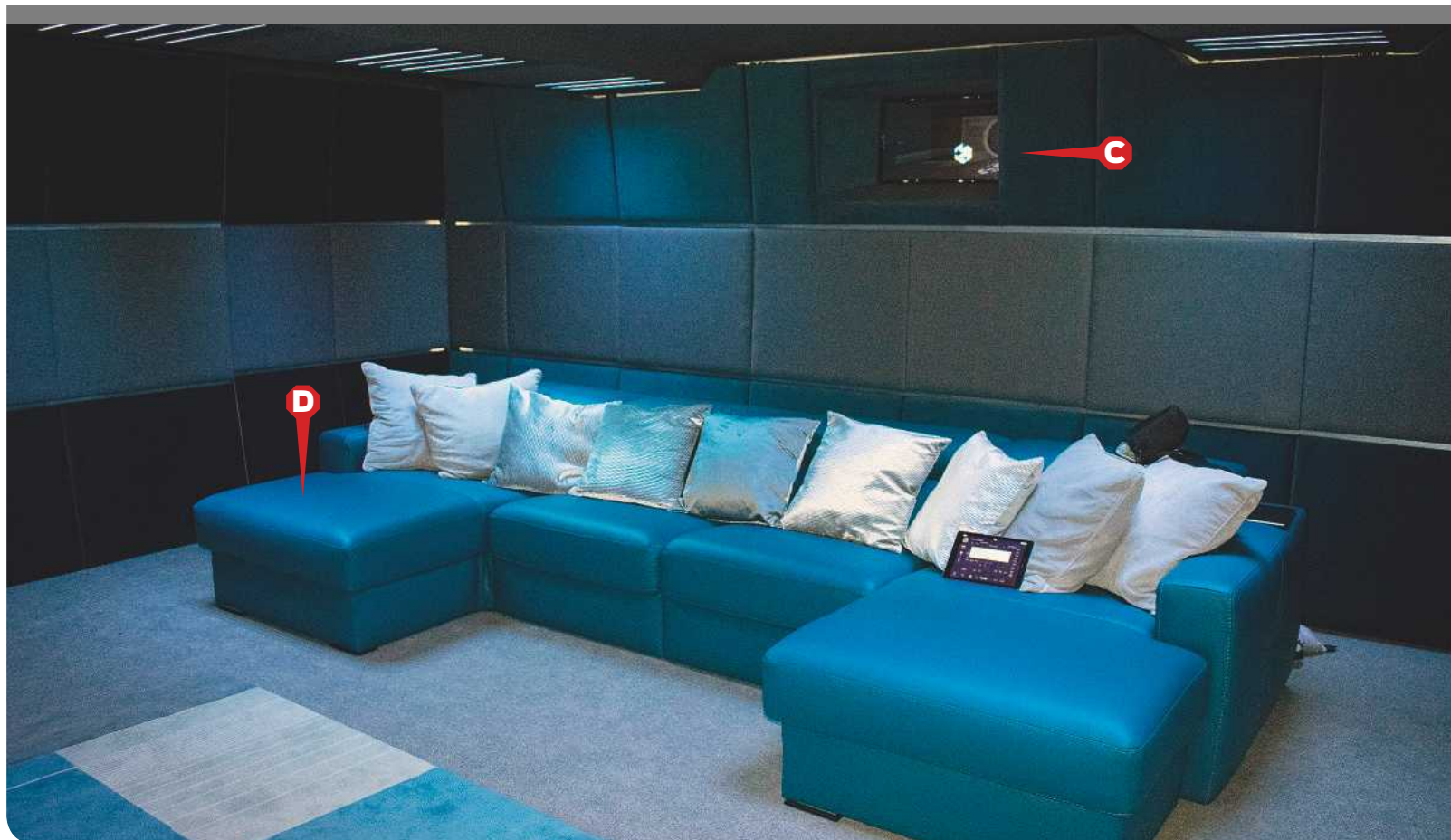
A. Screen of dreams

Meeting the owner's demand for the biggest screen possible is this mammoth 4.2m/165in wide 2.35:1 model from Ultimate Screens. Side-masking is on hand for 16:9 content

B. Light show

There are 42 RGB LED strips tucked away into the false ceiling. 'Any pattern and colour of lighting can be achieved' says the installer. 'When activated they sequentially illuminate towards the screen...' ➤





C. Quietly does it

The Wolf Cinema TFX5000 4K laser projector (rated at 3,200 Lumens) is installed in an external booth in the rear wall, making sure quiet movie sequences aren't ruined by tell-tale fan noise

D. Sit down, listen up

In place of traditional cinema seating, an expansive sofa/chaise longue was chosen providing line-of-sight viewing for four or more guests. The blue finish matches the rest of the theatre design

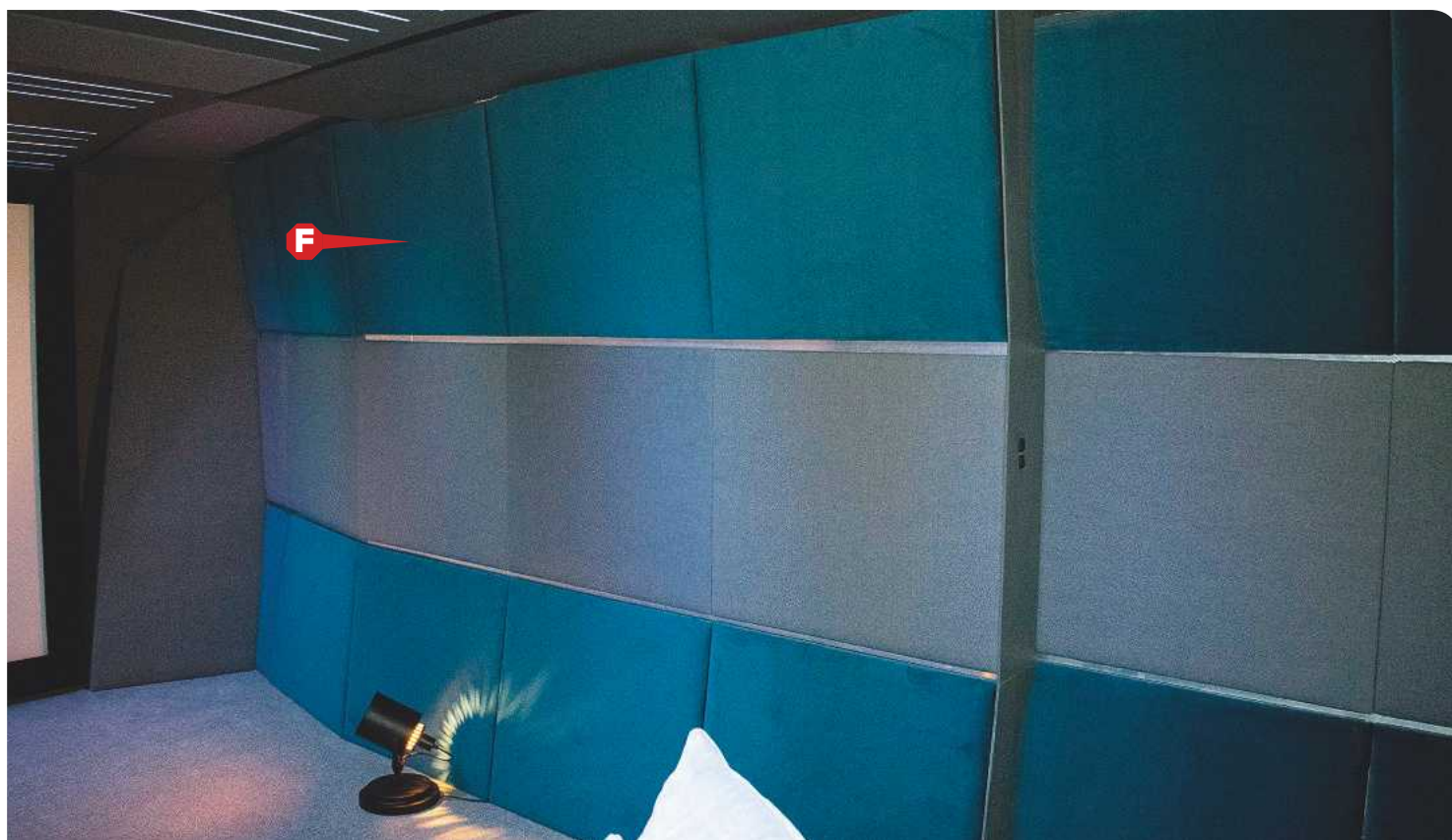


E. Control at hand

A tablet gives touchscreen access to a Crestron-powered interface that offers simple control over the room's multiple sources, lighting, temperature and motorised doors

F. Box of tricks

Dawsons transformed the bare-box room with fabric wall panels installed on a timber frame. These conceal the rear/surround speakers and help fine-tune the cinema's acoustics





SEE THE WORLD FIRST THE 8K/E-SHIFT PROJECTOR

The D-ILA projector evolves from 4K to 8K with JVC's e-shift technology. And now the world's first 8K/e-shift home theatre projector is here, at Musical Images, ready to amaze your senses. 'e-shift' is JVC's proprietary high-resolution display technology that shifts a pixel by 0.5 pixels vertically and horizontally to achieve 4 times the pixel density of the original content. That's the science. But no words will prepare you for the experience of seeing such big, bright, high contrast, colourful, pixel-sharp images!

Musical Images has been retailing, specifying and installing Home Cinema projectors for many years. For true product expertise, relaxed and comfortable demonstrations and the warmest of welcomes, come in and see Musical Images - and the remarkable D-ILA projector range - today.

DLA-NX9
DLA-N7
DLA-N5

D-ILA Projectors

DLA-NX9
World's first 8K/
e-shift technology*
*As of Aug 2018

DLA-N5 also
Available
in White



3 times award winner
HOME CINEMA CHOICE
"Best Multiroom Installation"

Check out our NEW website
www.musicalimages.co.uk

 musical images

 musical_images

 @musical_images

Musical Images Showrooms

126 High Street, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1EB
020 8663 3777 beckenham@musicalimages.co.uk

173 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7JX
020 8952 5535 edgware@musicalimages.co.uk

Opening times - 9:30am to 5:30pm • Closed on Wednesdays and Sundays

**HIFI • HOME CINEMA • MULTIROOM AUDIO • HOME AUTOMATION
LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS • A/V DESIGN & CONSULTANCY**

Audio Visual Lifestyle Ltd trading as Musical Images. Finance options available, subject to status. E.&O.E.

A 16-channel StormAudio processor/power amp combi is the beating heart of this cinema room. **Daniel Sait** discovers what else makes it a CEDIA Award winner

STORMAUDIO: ISP 3D 16 Elite processor; PA 16 Elite amplifier
DIGITAL PROJECTION: Hermes II HIGHlite 4K laser projector with 2.17-2.90:1 long-throw lens
SCREEN RESEARCH: XLR3 140in-wide side-masking screen – 2.35:1 aspect ratio
JAMES LOUDSPEAKER: 3 x QX830 in-walls (LCR); 6 x QX530 in-walls (surround); 6 x QX520 in-walls (height); 3 x M1000 amplifiers; 2 x M122 subwoofers; 2 x QX1020 subwoofers
AMAZON: Fire TV 4K
APPLE: Apple TV 4K
KALEIDESCAPE: Strato 4K server
OPPO: UDP-203 Ultra HD BD deck
SKY: Sky Q PVR
SAVANT: Savant Pro remote
VIZBOX ENCLOSURES: Projector airflow system; sound-isolating projector enclosure
FORTRESS SEATING: 6 x Lexington cinema seats





There's a rich mix of premium hardware and attention to detail in this picture palace designed by Cyberhomes. The owner, we're told, wanted 'the ultimate home cinema room' and that's what he got, not to mention a space crowned Best Home Cinema (£120,000-£340,000) at the recent CEDIA Awards.

Ion Smith, Cyberhomes founder and director, explains the brief. Dolby Atmos audio was a given but, if possible, a cut above 7.1.2. 'Also, the screen image had to be bright enough to use during the day with lights on for general sports/TV, as well as in darkened room state for movies.'

A StormAudio ISP 3D 16 Elite processor handles next-gen audio decoding for the room's 9.1.6-channel system. All models are from James Loudspeaker, fitted in-wall/in-ceiling. Power comes from a 16-channel StormAudio amplifier, with additional rack-mounted grunt for the quartet of subwoofers.

For visuals, the initial plan was for a Digital Projection E-Vision Laser 4K projector (7,500 Lumens, single-chip DLP) to be used, but after a comparison with the same brand's 3-chip, 12,500 Lumens HIGHlite beamer, the owner demanded the higher-spec model. Next on the kit list was a Lumagen Radiance Pro 4444 processor, which introduces HDR (including Dolby Vision and HDR10) playout to the system, making use of the projector's inherent brightness. Film and TV from assorted sources (racked in a boot room) are given cinematic impact by the 140in Screen Research projector screen ■

A. Sound idea

The room, which measures 7m x 4m approx, was treated with a bespoke acoustics package from specialist firm Vicoustic, and a recording studio-grade sound-isolating door installed

B. Bright enough for you?

The 12,500 Lumens projector is ISF calibrated with selectable brightness levels for lights-on and dark-room viewing



As the room takes shape, stud walls and ceiling (which was reinforced to accommodate the weight of the 4K PJ and its housing), plus copious cabling, are in place



The main LCR speakers (James Loudspeaker QX830s) were installed behind the screen. Two James M122 dual 12in subwoofers reside in the custom low-level cabinet



C. Have a lie down

Cinema seats from US brand Fortress, finished in décor-matching tones, provide movie watching in comfort for up to six

D. Add a splash of HDR...

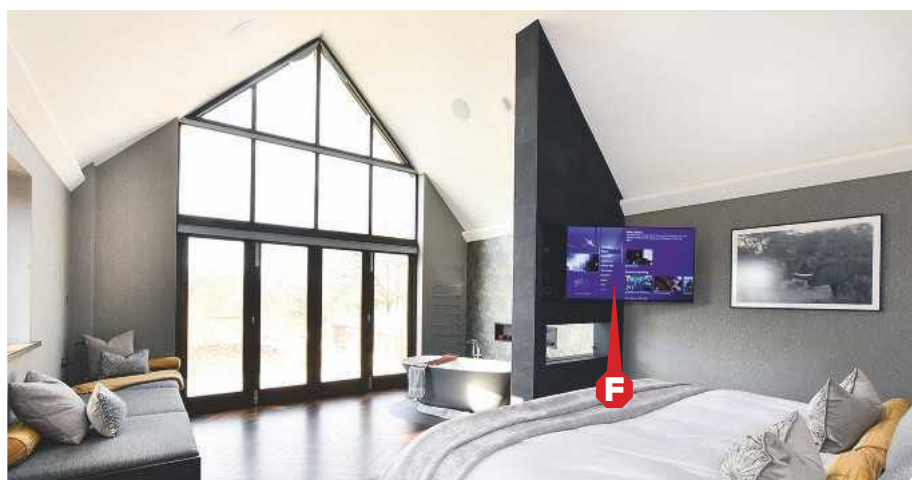
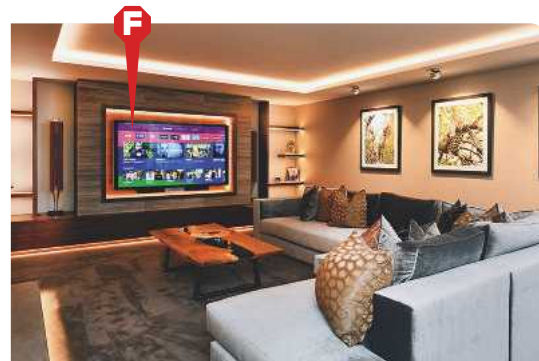
A Lumagen Radiance Pro handles HDR delivery to the high-brightness Digital Projection projector

E. ...and two more speakers

When the install began, StormAudio's processor maxed out at 9.1.4 – a subsequent update to support 9.1.6 arrays led to Cyberhomes reconfiguring the speaker system and adding a pair of additional height channels

F. TV on tap

The cinema room is part of a whole-home project. TV, movie and media sources are piped from hardware in the boot room to 4K screens installed around the house





SIM2 NERO 4S

A RIVETING PERFORMANCE

THERE ARE MANY 4K PROJECTORS, AND THEN THERE IS THE SIM2 NERO 4S

Take a seat and immerse yourself into a whole new world of images and entertainment with the SIM2 NERO 4S UHD HDR projector. Always engaging, powerful and even rousing, the SIM2 NERO 4S is a true standing ovation performer guaranteed not to disappoint!

MAIN FEATURES:

Single or dual projection systems available | DLP® 0.67" UHD chipset | Super High Definition Optics
Advanced HDR features with 4 presets to fit different screen sizes
High Brightness up to 6,000 ANSI lumen (10,000 ANSI Lumen on Dual NERO 4S)

Visit nero4.sim2.com to learn more...



Scan QR code or email
nero4s@invisionuk.com
to arrange a demonstration

SIM2 UK Distributor:
Invision UK Limited
www.invisionuk.com
01359 270280



WWW.SIM2.COM

The **Ultimate** in Home Cinema Entertainment Seating

SUPER COMFORTABLE & MULTI - FUNCTIONAL



Universal **Ultimate** 4 Seater
~~£9760~~ Now £4,850.00



Multi-functional Cupholder
Drinks Chiller, Massage
Recline, LED Base Light
& Child Lock



In-Arm Storage
Double USB Power



Universal Accessories Bracket
Swivel Table w/Cupholder,
Wine Holder & Tablet/Phone Holder
not shown



Top Grain Premium Leather
10 Yr Warranty

Specialists in **Home Cinema Seating** and **Luxury Cinema Sofas**. Visit us online to browse our huge range of models and options from basic high quality models or the latest super high end model with all the functions & accessories, above.

- Cinema seating prices start at £739 per seat.
- Hundreds of options available online.
- See our website for details.

FREE INSTALLATION & SET UP

Call us Quote AVHome or use Coupon:
AVHome on checkout.

08451283456 www.deluxdeco.co.uk/homecinemaseating
Delux Deco, Trinity Yard, 59 St Leonards Rd, Windsor Berks, SL4 3BX.



Delux Deco
luxury for less

REVIEWS

→ **HARDWARE** DENON Nine-channel AVR with Atmos, DTS:X and Auro-3D support
 SONY Native 4K HDR projector NAD Second-generation M17 Masters Series processor
 PIONEER Heavyweight universal UHD disc spinner IOTA Seven-channel home cinema amplifier
 JBL Affordable on-ear headphones AMAZON 6in wireless Echo Sub & MORE!



Klipsch's towers of power

This eye-catching system promises value for money, Atmos immersion and a dynamic delivery. See p58 for our verdict...

HCC RATINGS KEY...	
Outstanding	★★★★★
Above average	★★★★☆
Acceptable	★★★☆☆
Disappointing	★★☆☆☆
Dire	★☆☆☆☆

All prices quoted are approximate and may have changed

AV INFO

PRODUCT:

Nine-channel Atmos
AV receiver

POSITION:

Above the seven-
channel AVR-
X3500H, below
the 11-channel
AVR-X6500H

PEERS:

Yamaha RX-A3080;
Onkyo TX-RZ830

1. Denon's remote
is still a bit of a
button fest...

2. Behind the flap
you'll find a bonus
HDMI input

This AVR is the best reason to upgrade your home theatre yet, says **Steve May**

Denon hits a home run

When it comes to orcs, they don't get more impressive than Durotan, chieftain of the Frostwolf Clan. As wide as a rhino, with tusks that would make a walrus wince, he's power personified. Denon's AVR-X4500H is similarly impressive (*sans* teeth). Two hours into Duncan Jones' *Warcraft* movie, I was beginning to bruise from its effortless slam. Thank goodness I didn't choose *Creed* for this evaluation.

Denon's latest nine-channel Dolby Atmos AVR not only has the might to do justice to warring orcs, but it offers an impressive roster of functionality, from class-leading connectivity to all-embracing codec support, including standards yet to see the light of day. If you've been reluctant to upgrade your home theatre, the AVR-X4500H could finally be the carrot to make you capitulate.

All aboard the AV train

There's certainly no shortage of connectivity here – the rear panel has more ingress than Tokyo station. There are seven HDMI inputs, all 4K/HDCP 2.2 compliant, plus three outputs, two for screen and projector, the third for a Zone 2 feed. All HDMI inputs support 4K at 60fps, with 4:4:4 colour sub-sampling, Dolby Vision and HLG HDR support, and BT.2020 passthrough.

There's even eARC (enhanced Audio Return Channel) over HDMI, which opens the door for native Dolby Atmos multichannel passthrough (should you need it) and uncompressed next-gen audio. Officially designated 'HDMI 2.1 supporting eARC,' this isn't a full 2.1 spec HDMI port (we probably won't see that on AV receivers for at least another year), but unless you're planning to upgrade to 8K, it's close enough.

Out of the box, the receiver is capable of an immersive audio layout of 7.1.2 or 5.1.4, but there's 11.2-channel processing available if you have the room, speakers, amplification and inclination to take advantage of it (for this audition, I ran a 7.2.2 configuration). All channels utilise a 32-bit AKM (Asahi Kasei Microdevices) AK4458VN DAC, with a so-called 'velvet sound' architecture. This isn't actually new, having been used on Denon AVRs last year too.

The AVR-X4500H also features four digital audio inputs (two coaxial, two optical); five assignable analogue audio inputs; a phono input (for vinyl addicts); two component inputs (for retro game addicts) with one output; plus stereo audio outputs for Zones 2 and 3. There's even a Denon Link HD jack for owners of compatible disc players.

System control is similarly generous, and includes twin 12V triggers, RS-232C and IR remote connections. These, of course, are for advanced setups – more use to some will be Amazon Alexa control when partnered with an Echo device, allowing you to voice adjust volume or switch inputs.

As a 2018 AVR, there's plenty of wireless tech too, including Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Apple Airplay 2 and HEOS multiroom interoperability.

Need more connectivity? On the front panel there's an additional HDMI input (once again 4K/HDCP 2.2 compliant), plus a USB port.

The AVR-X4500H sees Denon embracing a new cosmetic design, although it's not veered too far off piste. The look is chic, with squared-corner modernity. The front fascia adopts a trapdoor design, with source select and master volume dials sandwiching a bright, clear, text display.

The receiver's headline power rating is 9 x 200W, but this is a 6 ohm measurement into a single channel with 1% THD. A more reasonable starting point is Denon's 125W (8 ohm/0.05% THD/two-channel) figure. Suffice to say, this monster can get rowdy. An Auto Eco mode is available to manage maximum power should you feel a need to exert some level of responsibility (being irresponsible, I didn't).

Onboard codec support covers Dolby Atmos, DTS:X and Auro-3D, plus all the post-processing >







3

variants those platforms cover. Intriguingly, our test sample arrived with a pre-eminent sticker proclaiming the AVR to be IMAX DTS Ready – an IMAX Enhanced firmware update, which unlocks compatibility with the proposed IMAX Enhanced standard, is due in February.

Beneath the hood there's AL32 processing to make the most of multichannel audio, through upsampling with bit-depth extension, with separate discrete digital/DAC boards to maintain performance purity.

AVRs can be ornery, but Denon has made an art of setup. A graphical assistant guides you through the process, including room EQ, in this case sophisticated Audyssey MultEQ XT32 calibration. I took full advantage of all the toys, measuring eight positions, and using the internal subwoofer matching mode to ensure a balanced LFE output of my two active subs.

'The X4500H pressure-loads a room without even raising a sweat, while sonic steerage is also sensational'

It was worth the effort. This top-flight Audyssey iteration is more precise than lesser versions, and does a generally excellent job. The balance achieved between deep bass, sledgehammer mid-range and sparkling detail was immediately apparent. Support for the Audyssey MultEQ Editor app (a £20 download) introduces extra calibration flexibility.

World of Warcraft

A familiar barrage of Dolby Atmos test clips, always used to quickly confirm the system was indeed working the way it should, sounded imperious and determined. That painstaking sub-bass matching rewards with an LFE that

impacts like a Saturn V lift-off, and the power plant in this receiver is quite something. It pressure-loads a room without even raising a sweat. Sonic steerage is also sensational, as *Warcraft* (Blu-ray) continually attested.

When the orcs first attack (Chapter 4), burly weapon-wielders break in from every corner. An oversized axe cleaves the front soundstage and deep bass rumbles believably. Then a magical blast sends one attacker flying from the front stage, through the trees above my head and into the far right corner of the room. My home cinema was under siege.

Of course, great movie sound isn't just about carnage and rumble. It's equally about ambience and subtlety.

4



In the aftermath of the orc battle, flies buzz around carcasses, their travels realistically pirouetting above and behind the listening position, with perfect spatial positioning. This is immersive audio done spectacularly well. Similarly, the library sequence (Chapter 3) recreates swirling wind and magical gurgles that echo around its cylindrical walls, hinting of things unseen in the shadows. Emphasising *Warcraft*'s epic sweep, the Atmos (height) channel is often used to carry Ramin Djawadi's stirring score, delivered here with authority and grace.

This receiver sits between the seven-channel AVR-X3500H (£900) and the 11-channel AVR-X6500H (£2,100), and has been tuned by Denon Sound Manager Yuuki Takahashi. In charge of the brand's own band of amplification orcs, his previous projects have included the AVP-A1HD, AVC-A1HD, AVC-X8500H, AVR-X7200WA and AVR-X6400H.

It replaces last year's AVR-X4400H, and introduces a number of component changes and upgrades. In particular, Takahashi and his team have reportedly refined the analogue and digital power supplies, and upgraded the HEOS network module to provide a better performance.

Various audio presets divide into Movie, Music, Game and Pure niches. These are contextual, changing according to content. And as the AVR offers a full suite of Dolby, DTS and Auro post-processing, there's plenty of fun to be had experimenting.

You'll also find a limited selection of DSP modes. Four fourth-generation SHARC DSP devices handle the mind-numbing number crunching. Modes like Jazz Club and Rock Arena still sound a little too pre-packaged to really convince, but ultimately it's a matter of taste. Alternatively, you can always opt for Pure Direct with minimal video processing.

Multichannel music is intoxicating via this upper-tier Denon. Emerson, Lake & Palmer's *Tocatta (Brain Salad Surgery, DVD-Audio)* is a frenetic experience, with Carl Palmer's percussion conducting hit and run attacks from every corner of the soundstage. The AVR delineates these assaults with crisp precision; Denon AV receivers have in the past had a reputation for warmth, which can

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY ATMOS: Yes **DTS:X:** Yes **THX:** No **MULTICHANNEL INPUT:** No **MULTICHANNEL PRE-OUT:** Yes, 11.2 phono **MULTICHANNEL OUTPUT (CLAIMED):** 9 x 125W (into 8 ohms, 20Hz-20kHz, 0.05% THD) **MULTIROOM:** Yes, Three zones **AV INPUTS:** 3 x composite; 4 x digital audio (2 x optical and 2 x coaxial) **HDMI:** Yes, 8 x inputs; 3 x outputs **COMPONENT VIDEO:** Yes, 2 x inputs; 1 x output **VIDEO UPSCALING:** Yes, To 4K **DIMENSIONS:** 434(w) x 389(d) x 236(h)mm **WEIGHT:** 13.7kg

FEATURES: HEOS multiroom compatible; Amazon Alexa voice compatibility; Audyssey MultEQ XT32 room calibration; eARC; ALAC, FLAC, WAV up to 24-bit/192kHz; DSD 2.8MHz/5.6MHz media playback; Ethernet; Wi-Fi; Bluetooth; USB input; Apple AirPlay 2; TuneIn radio; Spotify Connect, Tidal and Deezer; IMAX DTS playback; Clock Jitter Reducer; Compressed Audio Restorer

PARTNER WITH



SANUS CFR2115: Give your AV receiver a luxury home with this dedicated AV rack from accessories specialist Sanus. Available for around £350, it features top/bottom cooling vents, a lockable glass front door, two 3U sections and is supplied with blanking panels.

sometimes translate into a cloying cloak at volume. That's not the case here. Detail is laser-etched.

Marilyn Manson's *Revelation #12 (Heaven Upside Down, CD)* froths with righteous indignation. The track, featuring exhilarating production by Tyler Bates, is layered around a heavily distorted vocal, but the Denon doesn't allow this fritzz from infecting the hard-rocking downbeat. The analogue presentation even finds air in Manson's *Tattooed in Reverse* not easily heard. The source may only be 16-bit but you'd be hard-pressed to identify it as such.

While the AVR-X4500H's two-channel presentation is peerless, it's difficult to resist running CDs in Dolby Audio or DTS Neural:X, both of which spread the soundstage wide and high. These modes effectively take Manson's band out of the studio and onto a live stage. It's like going to a festival without camping.

Easy streaming of music services offers a convenience all will appreciate. This big box can be fully integrated with a HEOS multiroom system; even if used alone the HEOS app offers streaming from Spotify, TuneIn, Amazon Music, Sound Cloud, Tidal and Deezer.

Audio file compliance covers ALAC, FLAC and WAV to 24-bit/192kHz, plus 2.8MHz/5.6MHz DSD files. There's no native support for MQA though, which is about the only negative point I can muster in this review.

Can't be beaten

Denon's AVR-X4500H has more ticks than boxes. Connectivity is first-class, there's more than enough dynamic power on tap to rock your cinematic world, and it sounds consistently spectacular. Throw in HEOS multiroom and the prospect of IMAX certified fun and you've an orc-some AVR that pound for pound can't be beaten ■

HCC VERDICT



Denon AVR-X4500H

→ £1,500 → www.denon.co.uk

WE SAY: This Denon isn't just an immersive audio behemoth, it's a top-flight two-channel music machine too. And if IMAX Enhanced takes off, you'll be ahead of the curve.

3. Wanna give your music an immersive makeover? Use Dolby or DTS upmixing with your CD collection

4. While a nine-channel design, the receiver has 11-channel pre-outs



With interplanetary build quality and universal disc playback, the UDP-LX800 blows **Steve May** away

Pioneering player



AV INFO

PRODUCT:

Reference grade universal Ultra HD Blu-ray player

POSITION:

Flagship, above the UDP-LX500

PEERS:

Panasonic DP-UB9000;
Oppo UDP-205

**HOME
CINEMA**
Choice
REFERENCE STATUS



The Pioneer UDP-LX800 is to Blu-ray players what the Ark of the Covenant is to flatpack furniture; an imposing, grandiose, over-engineered behemoth boasting leading-edge video processing and audiophile musical chops.

Fully universal, it spins UHD Blu-rays and assorted derivatives, plus SACD and DVD-Audio discs, as well as regular CD platters. It's the higher-end stablemate to Pioneer's UDP-LX500, a model that is similarly substantial, but doesn't quite match it for refinement. If you're after the ultimate in no-compromise disc spinners, then the UDP-LX800 is it.

Formidable springs to mind when it comes to build quality. The deck's construction, with 1.6mm steel-sheet chassis and noise-deadening aluminium side panels, even eclipses Panasonic's premium DP-UB9000 [see HCC #292]. At 13.8kg, it's weightier than many AVRs. Anchoring the flagship are four large isolating feet with rubber anti-slip pads.

As there are no ventilation holes, the player is whisper-quiet in operation. It isn't a particularly speedy disc-loader though. Thanks in part to its languid spring-damped tray, it took my copy of *Goldfinger* 47 seconds to get to its main menu. Still, some things are worth waiting for...

Two-channel ambition

Back-panel connectivity runs to two HDMI outputs (one audio-only); optical and coaxial digital audio outputs; USB port; Ethernet; RS-232C; and dedicated stereo phonos bolstered by a balanced stereo output for use with a compatible pre-amp. There's no multichannel audio bank, however, which might surprise you. A second USB port is found on the front. Wi-Fi is integrated.

The £2,200 asking price gets you plenty of attention to detail under the bonnet. A complex six-layered circuit board has been engineered for minimum noise, in order to do justice to the high-speed signal transmission capability of UHD discs.

A three-block layout separates power supply, digital processing and analogue audio; a tried and tested way to combat electromagnetic interference. The analogue audio circuit itself has a dedicated 'quick-response' power transformer with custom-made capacitors. Pioneer engineers have even embossed the casework of the power transformer and power supply circuit, says the brand, to help combat standing waves within the player. In short, this is as painstakingly built a Blu-ray deck as you could hope to find.

Unfortunately, if there was a prize for UI design, this machine definitely wouldn't win. The home screen is dull and boring, offering just source selection and settings.

The source selector isn't just for physical media. It'll also locate suitable media servers when online. Audio file compatibility is extensive, covering MP3, WMA, ALAC, AIFF, WAV and FLAC up to 24-bit/192kHz, and DSD 2.8MHz and 5.6MHz. There's no native MQA support, but as Pioneer has been rolling out firmware to its network kit, we live in hope.



1. At £2,200, the UDP-LX800 tops the 4K Blu-ray market

2. Use the Display key on the backlit zapper to access disc info



3

While the main menu is almost apologetically simplistic, there is customisation and tuning available. The player offers a quartet of picture presets (Reference, OLED, LCD and Projector) to optimise the HDMI output for display types, with auto detection of SDR and HDR – the UDP-LX800 supports Dolby Vision, as well as regular HDR10. There's no love for HDR10+, however.

Display settings cover everything from 480p to source direct. In addition to colour sub-sampling (variable between 4:4:4, 4:2:2 and 4:2:0), the UDP-LX800 can interpolate native 8-bit discs to 10- or 12-bit depth. Unless you know what you're display supports, it's probably best to leave the player in Auto mode (a rule of thumb that solves many problems).

Much like the Oppo models it usurps, there's no streaming content provision. While this is hardly a deal-breaker for products of this calibre, it looks a little bereft without some VOD provision, particularly when compared to the Panasonic DP-UB9000 (which adds HDR10+ to the feature roster, too).

Of course, there are other ways to amuse yourself with the UDP-LX800 besides bingeing on *Better Call Saul*. The display information screen is a source of continual fascination, not least because you can use it to read HDR10 metadata to reveal the Maximum Frame-Average Light (MaxFALL) and Maximum Content Light Level (MaxCLL) of 4K discs. This trick lifts the veil on disc mastering, giving a clear indication just how much effort your screen will need to put into tone-mapping HDR content (the surprising answer, in my experience so far, is not that much). Yet this deep playback info is accessed only by holding the Display button on the remote down for an extended period – it's a bit of an Easter egg approach for something so compelling.

With regular Blu-rays, the same info screen shows basics such as resolution, frame-rate, colour space and colour depth, as well as the audio format and a live bitrate meter.

A feast for the eyes

Image quality with 4K UHD discs is drop-dead gorgeous. Calling up the same titles used to audition Panasonic's DP-UB9000, I was taken aback by the solidity and

4





dimensional realism of its pictures. *Pacific Rim: Uprising* (Ultra HD Blu-ray) is a feast for the eyes, combining precise Dolby Vision HDR with flawless skin texture and ravishing, nuanced colour. The player eagerly rewards owners of high-grade displays (I auditioned it primarily with a Sony AF9 OLED). *Despicable Me 2*, another Dolby Vision encode, exhibits sumptuous colour rendering, with tight highlights and crisp detail. The deck puts everything onscreen, without noise and artefacts. Standard Blu-ray performance, with upscaling handled by the UDP-LX800, is equally outstanding, with fine, unfettered detail and smooth hues.

It's a matter of conjecture whether the UDP-LX800 is comparable to, or better than, its Panasonic rival when it comes to image quality. Both offer pristine detail.

Under the microscope, differences between the two players become slightly more apparent, though. A magnified snapshot of a 4K zone plate chroma frequency response test reveals a stepped edge to ultra-fine, curved edges on the big Pioneer. The same content on the Panasonic has no such coarse stepping, and is smoother as a result. But this is a semantic difference. When it comes to what's seen onscreen, both are five-star performers.

Listen up!

It's sonically where the UDP-LX800 really stands out. This player is second to none, with a character that's refined, musical and detailed.

Its audio design owes much to Pioneer's PD-70AE SACD/CD player. The two decks share an identical PCB stereo signal path (if it ain't broke...) and component layout, not to mention the same 32-bit, Parallel Drive ESS ES9026 PRO Sabre DACs.

Direct function can be used to shut down digital audio and video circuits, to better serve high-resolution sound sources and CDs. When using the stereo analogue stage, you can also select one of three DSP filters (Sharp, Short and Slow) to fine-tune the output to your liking. Differences here are best described as subtle.

The player does a transformative job with high-grade CD pressings. There's no metallic edge, no sibilance, not even

SPECIFICATIONS

3D: Yes **ULTRA HD:** Yes. **HDR:** Yes. HDR10; Dolby Vision **UPSCALING:** Yes. To 2160p **MULTIREGION:** No. Region B BD/R2 DVD **HDMI:** Yes. 2 x outputs (1 x audio-only) **MULTICHANNEL ANALOGUE:** No **DIGITAL AUDIO:** Yes. 1 x optical digital audio output; 1 x coaxial digital audio output **ETHERNET:** Yes **BUILT-IN WI-FI:** Yes **SACD/DVD-A:** Yes/Yes **DIMENSIONS:** 435(w) x 131(h) x 339(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 13.8kg

FEATURES: Balanced XLR stereo outputs; ESS SABRE ES9026 PRO DACs; 2 x USB; RS-232C control; DLNA media playback (MP3, WMA, ALAC, AIFF, WAV and FLAC to 24-bit/192kHz; DSD 2.8MHz/5.6MHz; AVI, JPEG, MPEG); display screen including MaxFALL and MaxCLL; PQLS (Precision Quartz Lock System) jitter reduction

PARTNER WITH



SONY KD-65AF9: Match the Pioneer UDP-LX800 to Sony's equally high-end (and high-style) Dolby Vision-enabled 4K OLED TV. A 55in version sells for around £3,000; for a more immersive experience, opt for the larger £4,000 65in set.

the vaguest sense of discord. Even the worst excesses of mass-produced platters are largely tamed.

Ditto for SACD playback. Spinning saxophonist Tommy Smith's modern jazz outing *Blue Smith* (Linn Records) is probably the next best thing to being in the recording studio for a live session. The soundstage has tangible girth, and resolution in reserve.

Indeed, the UDP-LX800 is exactly the kind of disc spinner that will have you eagerly revisiting library favourites. The multichannel mix of Blue Man Group's *Mandelgroove*, from the *Audio DVD-A* release, proves even more gloriously immersive than I remember. Come back DVD-A, all is forgiven...

When using HDMI, there's a Transport function to cut the power supply to the analogue audio transformer circuit; with only the digital circuitry powered, there's a claimed benefit in HDMI signal-to-noise ratio.

I am not worthy

Pioneer has produced something uniquely special with the UDP-LX800. This BD beast sets a new standard for build quality and AV performance, combining peerless video replay with sensational sound quality. In fact, I'd argue no UHD player comes close to the UDP-LX800 in terms of musical performance, and that includes the Oppo UDP-205. This is unquestionably an audiophile-grade component.

The only shortfall, at least in comparison with its more affordable rival, the Panasonic DP-UB9000, is the lack of HDR10+ support and streaming media apps. But are either an issue, given that only a few displays support the HDR10+ standard, and streaming services are pretty much ubiquitous on other devices? That's for you to decide.

In every sense, the UDP-LX800 is a phenomenal UHD Blu-ray player. Worship one today ■

3. There's a balanced XLR stereo output, but no multichannel phono option

4. Pioneer's deck flaunts logos for Super Audio CD, DVD-Audio and Dolby Vision

HCC VERDICT



Pioneer UDP-LX800

→ £2,200 → www.pioneer-audiovisual.eu

WE SAY: This reference-grade UHD flagship player currently has no equal. Offering superb video performance and universal audio support, it's sensational.

AV INFO

PRODUCT:

Native 4K and HDR projector using Sony SXR technology

POSITION:

The entry-level model in Sony's new 4K projector range

PEERS:

Optoma UHD65; JVC DLA-X5900

1. Sony's familiar remote handset provides slick control over focus and zoom

2. Front-facing vents cool the VW270ES's 225W lamp

3. A black chassis option is also available



Sony has kicked off its latest 4K projector lineup in style, reckons **John Archer**

Beaming brilliance

After having the 4K projector space pretty much to itself for a few years, times have got tougher for Sony's projection division. We're now seeing models certified for 4K playback (using DLP's rapid mirror-switching technology) selling for as little as a £1,000, and JVC will soon be launching its first sub-£10,000 native 4K projectors, having first aimed for the very high-end with its £35,000 laser-based DLA-Z1.

Sony's impressive new VPL-VW270ES – its entry-level 4K PJ, albeit priced £5,000 – suggests that the brand isn't feeling fazed by all the extra competition, and is sticking with its UHD projection game plan.

There's no compromise in build quality and design. The VPL-VW270ES still enjoys a robust, metallic finish, and is actually a touch bigger – specifically, taller – than previous Sony mid-range and entry-level PJs. It also still features a promisingly large lens recessed into the centre of its front fascia, and looks pleasantly domesticated thanks to its rounded and arced top edge.

The connections tucked under the projector's right side are an improvement on those found on any previous entry-level Sony 4K projector. This is because the two HDMI inputs now support full-bandwidth, 18Gbps 4K HDR images at 60fps – which is handy now that broadcast HDR is becoming a thing. Other connections of note include a 12V trigger and an RS-232C control port.

Chip off the SXR block

The projection engine is built around three of Sony's native 4K (actually 4,096 x 2,160) SXR projector chips, and there's support for HDR10 and HLG HDR as well as standard dynamic range. A 225W lamp apparently delivers 1,500 Lumens maximum light output, but Sony doesn't provide any contrast ratio specifics. Setup is relatively easy; the PJ's zoom, optical image shifting and focus systems are all motorised and accessed by the large, spacious, logical and backlit remote control. The zoom extends to a whopping 2.06x, making the projector nicely flexible.

As expected, the VPL-VW270ES introduces more than just improved HDMI connectivity compared to the previous VPL-VW260ES. A new HDR Reference mode, for instance, tries to deliver accurate saturations of colours right up to

the 1,000 nits of peak brightness used by many HDR sources, rather than 'rolling off' below 1,000 nits, as happens in the unit's other HDR modes. Also new here is a 4K version of Sony's Motionflow processing for reducing judder; an Input Lag reduction mode for gamers that reduces the time the PJ takes to render pictures to 30ms; and anamorphic lens compatibility for 4K signals.

Onscreen menus are straightforward, although getting the best from HDR sources will mean revisiting some of the menus more often than you might want. In particular, I'd recommend setting HDR Contrast to 77 for 1,000-nit sources, and nearer 90 for 4,000-nit encodes. And that's assuming you know what brightness level an HDR source has been mastered to, of course.

Sony's core picture technology might not have changed much, but this beamer is a significant step forward from the VW260ES. When it comes to dark scenes, it handles the gorgeous blackness of space in the new *2001: A Space Odyssey* 4K Blu-ray with more authority and black level depth than its predecessor, and does so without having compromised its brightness at all. On the contrary, since its peak light levels seem around the same as those of the VW260ES, while black levels are deeper, its imagery feels consistently more contrast-rich. The dynamics of *2001...*'s beautifully remastered space sequences are presented with panache.

This model doesn't feature a dynamic iris; for that you'll need to find £3,000 or so more for the step-up VPL-VW570ES. Yet this relative simplicity from a contrast perspective does mean that pictures appear completely stable (free of light jumps and flickers) even during *2001...*'s most extreme light-to-dark cuts.

It also responds better than expected to the *2001...* 4K Blu-ray's expanded colour palette. No projector – especially a non-laser model – can get close to the full colour range

2



HOME
CINEMA
Choice
RECOMMENDED



contained within HDR sources. But through its clever brightness and contrast adjustments with HDR, and Sony's Triluminos colour system, it does give what appears to be a gentle but engaging HDR push.

And, crucially, this slight colour expansion is handled superbly by Sony's processing; tones still look impeccably natural across the board, from Dave's subdued skin tones to HAL's sinister red eye and the famous, psychedelic inter-dimensional 'tunnel'.

Wow factor

The VW270ES's native 4K detailing is breathtaking. While many of the budget 4K DLP projectors achieve resolutions that look comfortably in excess of HD, the extra crispness, texturing and purity of these images was undeniable enough to cause numerous involuntary 'wows' during my audition period.

There's an almost visceral impact to this Sony's 4K performance, an effect helped by clarity remaining impressively intact when there's motion in the frame. Stick with the True Cinema motion mode, and everything from the statesmanlike rotations of the space ships in *2001...* to the handheld camera work of *The Bourne Supremacy* (Ultra HD Blu-ray) always look natural, detailed and believable.

It's also a treat to bathe in the glory of all the VW270ES's pixels with no distractions from video

artefacts such as noise, stressy edging or, in the case of DLP projectors, the rainbow effect (flitting stripes of red, blue and green).

In fact, by the time you've added together the PJ's extreme clarity, improved contrast, impressive motion and freedom from any sort of noise, you've got an awesomely direct viewing experience.

So what are its limitations? Well, while it handles SDR content pretty much immaculately with only 1,500 nits to play with, contrast-rich HDR scenes can lack pop versus brighter projectors and, more obviously, good HDR TVs.

'Extreme clarity, improved contrast and impressive motion result in an awesome viewing experience'

I also found myself often tweaking the HDR Contrast setting to try and limit the occasions, during HDR playback, when relatively dark foreground objects began to look like empty black shells. And even then I still experienced this HDR 'silhouetting' issue from time to time.

Black levels can sometimes look a bit grey during HDR playback, too – but seldom to a degree that becomes truly distracting. And, actually, the VPL-VW270ES performs surprisingly well in this regard considering it lacks a dynamic iris.

The PJ's brightness limitations lead to some clipping of detail and toning in peak light areas of HDR pictures (such as *2001...*'s most intense shots of sunlight, or visor reflections). This is the downside to using high HDR Contrast settings, as raising the brightness 'floor' of HDR pictures inevitably causes more clipping in the brightest areas. This problem is exacerbated by the HDR Reference setting (which is probably why Sony doesn't use this mode by default).

A final negative point is that while the VPL-VW270ES runs impressively quietly (barely more than a murmur) during SDR playback provided the lamp is set to its Low option, with the lamp pushed into High mode for HDR the

SPECIFICATIONS

3D: Yes. Active (although glasses are an optional extra) **4K:** Yes. 4,096 x 2160 resolution **HDR:** Yes. HDR10; HLG **CONNECTIONS:** 2 x HDMI inputs; RS-232C; USB service port; 12V trigger; IR input; Ethernet **BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED):** 1,500 Lumens **CONTRAST (CLAIMED):** N/A **ZOOM:** 2.06x **DIMENSIONS:** 496(w) x 205(h) x 464(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 14kg

FEATURES: SXRD projector; 6,000-hour claimed lamp-life in Low lamp mode; 4K anamorphic lens support; Motionflow motion processing; optical image shifting (vertical +85%/-80%; horizontal +/-31%); Reality Creation processing; HDR Reference mode; HDR contrast adjustment; 1.38-2.83:1 throw ratio

PARTNER WITH



SONY TDG-BT500A:

The PJ is 3D-compatible, but doesn't come supplied with 3D glasses, so stereoscopic fans will need to find £50 for a pair of Sony's (Lithium battery-powered, rated 100 hours) active shutter spex.

fans have to work much harder, and are therefore noisier. The projector has a get out of jail card here, though, in that its fan noise is smooth, deep and consistent, making it pretty easy to tune out. A seating position away from the unit is still advised though.

Most importantly, this projector's good points hold comfortable sway over its niggles. Sony has built upon the fine work of its previous 4K range, refining performance to deliver a real 'destination' product for resolution-hungry home cinema fans. And with JVC's new entry-level DLA-N5 model set to retail at £6,500, the VPL-VW270ES has a price point all of its own. Highly recommended ■

4. The HDMI inputs now support 18Gbps 4K/60fps passthrough

HCC VERDICT



Sony VPL-VW270ES

→ £5,000 → www.sony.co.uk

WE SAY: Although it will face stiff competition from new JVC models, the more affordable VPL-VW270ES is good enough to more than hold its own.

4



The Worlds Finest Filmmakers use M&K to Make their Movies
Does Your Cinema Deserve Anything Less?



“Best Home Cinema Speakers 2017”

M&K Sound S300 THX Series

“This system is superb and is composed of The Best Home Cinema Speakers of the year.”

Phil Hinton, avforums

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| * Warner Bros | * Dreamworks | * DTS |
| * 20th Century Fox | * HBO | * Dolby Labs |
| * Universal | * Skywalker Sound | * Sony Music |
| * Paramount | * Disney | * Lucas Film |
| | * THX | |

M&K SOUND®

www.mksound.com

For more information please contact our exclusive distributor in the UK, Gecko Inc Ltd, phone 0845 262 2882

The Choice of Professionals®

NAD's M17 processor has been updated to V2 guise.
Steve Withers welcomes the new functionality

Home cinema Mod Squad





AV INFO

PRODUCT:
11-channel Dirac
processor with
modular design

POSITION:
Part of NAD's
Masters Series
AV range

PEERS:
Arcam AV860;
Marantz AV8805

Ever suffered premature obsolescence? Don't be embarrassed, it happens to all of us. And there's nothing more annoying than buying a piece of equipment, only to discover not long later that it's out of date. In our ever-changing AV world, this experience is becoming all too common, not just with TVs, but AV separates too.

NAD thinks it has the solution. Way back in 2006, the Canadian audio company launched its Modular Design Construction (MDC) architecture, allowing customers to upgrade their AV receiver or processor with new technologies and additional features.

The NAD Masters Series M17 on test here uses MDC to upgrade specs to 'V2' status, replacing the original digital audio and HDMI MDC modules of the previous M17 [see HCC #245], with a new AM 17 Atmos/SPDIF/Dirac module, and VM 300 4K HDMI and LAN module. The latter adds HDMI 2.0 with support for 4K/60p at 4:4:4, High Dynamic Range (HDR10 and Dolby Vision), and HDCP 2.2 copy protection – all features that any high-end home cinema in 2018 should have.

If you own the original M17 the VM 300 is available for free, while the AM 17 module costs £650. A new, factory-fresh M17 V2 forgoes the original's analogue video MDC module (still present on our unit), although it can be specified as an optional extra.

A firmware update then brings the unit bang up-to-date, including exchanging the original Audyssey room EQ software for Dirac Live, and adding BluOS. The latter, a music management and multiroom operating system developed by NAD's sister brand Bluesound, includes the excellent BluOS app (iOS or Android). You can access 'net radio stations and music services such as Spotify, Amazon Music, Deezer and Tidal. In the case of the latter two, there's support for Master Quality Authenticated (MQA) high-resolution audio.

The only downside to BluOS is that to enjoy the benefits you need to install the upgrade kit, which is basically an off-the-shelf USB hub with a Wi-Fi dongle and a Bluetooth USB micro adapter connected, all of which you plug into the USB port on the back of the processor. It works, but is far from an elegant solution.

NAD's AM 17 module adds support for Dolby Atmos with decoding for up to 11.2 channels and a 7.2.4 speaker layout. NAD plans to add DTS:X via a firmware update before the year ends – along with BluOS-2i firmware and Apple AirPlay 2 (subject to Apple certification).

The M17 already had outputs for seven channels using either balanced XLR or phono outputs, along with two subwoofer outputs: one using XLR or phono and the other limited to just phono. The AM 17 module adds four more channels using balanced mini-XLR outputs (NAD supplies mini-XLR to XLR adapters), but interestingly there are no corresponding phono terminals.

Heavy metal

NAD's design remains superb. The M17 has a silver/black two-tone finish and is built like the proverbial battleship, using a machined aluminium chassis with some surprisingly sharp corners. It sits on four built-in spiked feet, but there are also magnetic feet to put under >

1. Bluesound's BluOS music playback system is a new addition to the M17

2. You'll need 4 x AA batteries to spark NAD's remote into life





3

the spikes if your equipment stand needs protection. A logo on the left-hand of the front panel lights up when the unit is on and doubles as a power button. On the other side is a large volume dial, while in the centre there's a touch-sensitive display that is both informative and intuitive to use – my only complaint would be that you can't turn it off completely, which is annoying in a darkened movie room.

The remote is large and heavy, with an aluminium and black finish that matches the processor itself. There's a blue backlight which is useful in the dark, but I'm pretty

'An incredibly neutral performance, with sonic elements clearly defined and a superb sense of balance'

sure it doesn't require four AA batteries. On the plus side you won't have to change them very often, and you can use the controller to club any burglars.

The M17 has a simple but effective onscreen menu system, and once I'd wired everything up (using Marantz/Arcam power amps and M&K Sound speakers) it was fairly easy to set up the processor itself. Operation is user-friendly; the display not only shows the source and volume, but also the incoming audio signal (on the left) and the video signal (on the right).

Dirac Live room correction, added by the AM 17 module, is combined with a new calibration microphone and software available for either Windows or MacOS. The implementation is identical to other manufacturers such as Arcam, taking nine measurements to produce detailed EQ graphs.

Dirac then applies target curves using supercomputer wizardry to flatten the frequencies and tighten up the impulse responses. The result is an incredibly neutral performance, with individual sonic elements clearly defined, and the overall soundfield retaining a wonderful sense of balance and cohesion.

Primal performance

Although the primary reason for buying an M17 is to use it as a surround sound processor, it is equally capable with stereo music content. It aced my regular two-channel tests, and I particularly enjoyed listening to the newly released 'Memphis' recordings of Primal Scream's *Give Out but Don't Give Up*. The M17 created a spacious front soundstage, with effective stereo imaging and localisation of instruments. It delivered the first two rockers with all the swagger they deserved, before weaving through the elegantly wasted blues of the rest of the album.

With film soundtracks this processor really gets a chance to strut its stuff, and it did so with a captivating sense of precision. The 5.1-channel DTS-HD MA mix of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Ultra HD Blu-ray) was played out with an accuracy that surely would have put a smile on

4



Stanley Kubrick's face. The classical score was beautifully rendered, giving the docking spaceships a sweeping elegance as they dance in time to *The Blue Danube*.

It's also an incredibly bold soundtrack that has the courage to portray the soundless vacuum of space realistically. You simply hear the astronauts breathing and the hissing of their life support, simple details that proved strikingly effective and realistic via the M17. The film's various other environments, from the openness of the arid African plains or the clinical and claustrophobic nature of life onboard Discovery, were also handled to perfection, each imbued with their own sonic signature.

Of course, the big selling point of this V2 update is support for the object-based immersive audio formats. The new Dolby Atmos soundtracks on *The Matrix Trilogy* (Ultra HD Blu-ray) put the NAD through its paces. The famous 'bullet time' sequences in the first film sounded, frankly, awesome, as the processor steered the slow-motion sound effects through a clearly defined three-dimensional space.

That sense of a tangible environment was also apparent as hovercraft travelled through the tunnel networks in all three films. The overhead channels were used to create the feeling of actually moving through an enclosed space, while the crackle of the propulsion systems were also clearly defined. The M17 never sounds muddled, just clean and precise. The same was true of the epic freeway chase in *The Matrix Reloaded*, as cars and bikes weaved through traffic with terrifying, rubber-burning realism. The sequence becomes incredibly visceral as Foley effects create cars zooming past you, or the camera literally goes under a truck.

However, for sheer all-channel action, the third film's climatic battle in the Zion docking bay proved an aural *tour de force*. I had sentinels swarming all round my room, moving seamlessly from speaker to speaker. The guns on the armoured personnel units had a massive percussive impact, delivered with exquisite timing by the processor and revealing its ability to integrate my system's twin active subwoofers with the wider array. The sub-sonic explosions, as all hell broke loose during the battle, were equally well controlled; atop this, I could still hear dialogue

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY ATMOS: Yes. 7.1.4 channels **DTS:X:** No. But firmware update imminent
THX: No **MULTICHANNEL INPUT:** No **MULTICHANNEL PRE-OUT:** Yes. 11.1 XLR and 7.2 phono **MULTICHANNEL OUTPUT (CLAIMED):** None – processor only **MULTIROOM:** Yes. 4 x zones, plus BluOS **AV INPUTS:** Yes. 4 x digital audio (2 x optical; 2 x coaxial) **HDMI:** Yes. 5 x inputs; 2 x outputs **COMPONENT VIDEO:** Yes. 2 x inputs; 1 x output **VIDEO UPSCALING:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 435(w) x 386(d) x 156(h)mm **WEIGHT:** 10.9kg

FEATURES: Modular Design Construction; Dirac Live room correction; hi-res audio support including MQA; BluOS; Ethernet; Wi-Fi; Bluetooth; HDCP 2.2; 4K 50/60p passthrough; 4:4:4 sub-sampling; HDR10; Dolby Vision; HDMI ARC; 192kHz/24-bit DACs; RS-232C; IR input/output; 12V trigger input/output

PARTNER WITH



BLUESOUND VAULT 2: This £1,000 hi-res multiroom hub offers a 2TB HDD for music storage, CD ripping to FLAC/MP3, and access to 'net radio and network stored content. Use the BluOS app to stream all this through the M17 into your cinema room.

clearly, and the sound of shell casings rattling to the ground. It was a remarkable audio experience.

I'm pleased that NAD has kept the audio modes to a minimum, as I've never been a fan of esoteric DSP processing. However I am a big fan of Dolby Surround upmixing, which can often make 5.1/7.1 mixes sound like they have genuine overhead channels. HAL's voice in *2001: A Space Odyssey* seemed to emanate from above, making him (it?) seem even more omniscient.

Don't underestimate the impact of Dirac Live either: activating it results in an immediate improvement in sound quality. Even in my dedicated home cinema, the software's sophisticated room correction causes the walls to simply disappear, just leaving a film's carefully designed soundtrack intact. Rain pouring down during Neo's final fight with Agent Smith in *The Matrix Revolutions* sounded completely authentic with Dirac engaged, gaining a sense of location and definition.

Promise fulfilled

4K HDR compatibility and Dolby Atmos decoding are now must-have features at this price point, so owners of NAD's original M17 will be thrilled that the company has fulfilled its promise of upgradability. The addition of Dirac Live is a major bonus too and it really works, eliminating a room's aural signature from the overall soundfield; the performance here is A-grade, regardless of whether you're listening to two-channel or a full Atmos system. BluOS integration could perhaps have been better handled, but this adds functionality that gives the new-spec M17 an edge over the (more affordable) Arcam AV860. And, as always with NAD's MDC components, part of the appeal here is the level of futureproofing against tech developments. A high-end processor with peace of mind thrown in ■

HCC VERDICT



NAD Masters Series M17 V2

→ £5,500 → www.nadelectronics.com

WE SAY: NAD's processor delivers a masterful surround experience worthy of Masters Series branding, and remains up to date in a rapidly changing AV world.

3. Mini-XLR outputs are added for four height channels

4. One flaw in the MDC process is that it doesn't remove legacy logos from the fascia – Audyssey has been replaced by Dirac...



AV INFO

PRODUCT:

5.1.2 floorstanding speaker system

POSITION:

Next to Atmos-integrated models in Klipsch's home theatre stable

PEERS:

Elipson Prestige Facet; Monitor Audio Bronze

Klipsch is back in the UK with its all-new Reference series and **Ed Selley** thinks it means business

Horn-loaded high jinx

Some speaker brands change their design language to suit the current mood, opting for whatever the prevailing trends suggest is working with the public. Others find the solutions they like and stick with them – US brand Klipsch might as well be the poster child for the latter approach. Established in 1946, it has employed many of the same technologies ever since.

The new Reference Series auditioned here is slightly confusingly named because it is neither the flagship lineup in the Klipsch stable (the Reference Premiere is above it) nor the only models so titled. It comprises three floorstanders, two standmounts (with powered variants of those available too), two centres, two subwoofers and an upward-firing module that can be used on top of the front and rear speakers.

Our system features the £700-per-pair R-620F floorstander (the middle of the three available), the R-51M standmount (£250p/p) and the £350 R-34C centre. These are joined by the R-41SA effects speaker (£350p/p) and R-100SW subwoofer (£350).

What ties the range together – and is a defining characteristic of Klipsch products going back 70 years – is the tweeter. This is horn-loaded, a practise that's fairly uncommon in this day and age. Here, the tweeter is mounted deep inside a square 'Tractix' horn assembly recessed into the cabinet front. This turns the tweeter into a compression driver, making use of the horn aperture to correct the difference in air-pressure loading between the driver and the air in front of it. This helps sensitivity and aids dispersion. Klipsch partners the horn-loaded tweeter with a copper-coloured injection-moulded graphite (IMG) driver. The front, centre and rear speakers are all ported for improved bass response.

Slender centre

The R-34C centre speaker is perhaps the most unusual of this system's components. To reduce its height and simplify placement, it is fitted with four 3.5in midbass drivers and a horn tweeter, which means it's only 13cm tall but a more considerable 66cm wide. While it looks a little odd, it's commendably clear thinking and the radiating area of the four drivers is equivalent, explains Klipsch, to a brace of 6.5in units. The only area of mild concern is that it

contributes to a situation where every speaker in this surround sound pack uses a different-sized main driver, which goes against the notional ideal.

The partnering R-100SW sub adds another driver to the complement although this is to be expected. Its 10in IMG woofer, also copper-coloured, is powered by a 150W (300W peak) Class D amplifier in a rear-ported cabinet.

The final R-41SA upfiring speaker completes the pack and still manages to locate a horn tweeter into a compact enclosure alongside a 4.5in midbass. It has its own terminals, so can be used with any speaker rather than being tied to specific Klipsch models.

Whether or not you like the styling will be a matter of personal taste. I think the speakers are handsome-looking things and the fit and finish is extremely good – there's a no-nonsense quality to them that hopefully lends them a little timelessness. Yet I know some will struggle to be won over by the copper drivers and will feel the need to hide them with Klipsch's grilles. It would be nice to have a finish other than black, too – and if black is the only option, I don't really understand why you'd texture it to look like wood, but it is at least well applied.

Anyway, there's more to a loudspeaker than what it looks like...

Like it loud

Horn-loaded tweeters came into being in part because they increased the sensitivity of a speaker – useful in the time of valve amps. This Reference Series array hasn't lost this trait (the R-620F's sensitivity rating is 96dB) and needs very little power to go meaningfully and impressively loud. This in turn lends an effortlessness to their presentation that really helps with largescale events.

They don't get much larger than the detonation of the drones by the USS Franklin in *Star Trek Beyond* (Blu-ray), and with this sequence these speakers are in

1. All the speakers feature horn-loaded tweeters – a Klipsch speciality



their element. The overrunning wave of drones is well captured in the Atmos height channels and the system walks the fine balance of conveying the vast numbers involved while still picking out individual details. Information is moved around slickly from speaker to speaker and the wide dispersion ensures that the effect is a seamless and unbroken soundfield.

The biggest surprise in the pack is the slim R-34C centre. It fulfils its role admirably. Dialogue is always clear and easy to follow and there was rather more weight and scale than I was expecting. Crucially, despite the rather different configuration between it and the left and right enclosures, the LCR stage sounds impressively integrated in a way that even some more expensive packages I have heard have struggled with.

'The sonic results are convincing. There's scale and impact here that ensures a cinematic performance'

With the complex sequence in *Atomic Blonde* (Blu-ray) where Lorraine and Spyglass attempt to escape to the West, the Klipsch excels. Crowd scenes are packed with sonic details that are resolved very effectively – I felt I was in the midst of a mass of people. One of the reasons why this is as convincing as it is comes down to the ability of all the main speakers (and to an extent, the height channels as well) to impart a sense of weight in their own right. Lower mid-tones/upper bass registers are robust, and the benefit this grants the pack is considerable.

When the woofer is really called into action, it proves to be a fine performer that complements the passive models well. The detonation of explosive charges that sets off the attack on Scarif in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (Blu-ray) is a case in point. Despite the meagre specification, the R-100SW delivers LFE that is felt as well as heard and does so with an absence of bloat or overhang. It seems Klipsch has worked hard to ensure that the cabinet, amplifier and driver work together in a manner that is greater than the sum of its parts. Under all but the more appalling provocation it stays controlled and agile. Given

SPECIFICATIONS

R-620F

DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 6.5in IMG woofers; 1 x 1in Tractrix tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Ported **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 38Hz-21kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 96dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 100W **DIMENSIONS:** 240(w) x 1,017(h) x 386(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 18.6kg

R-51M

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 5.25in IMG woofers; 1 x 1in Tractrix tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Ported **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 68Hz-21kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 93dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 85W **DIMENSIONS:** 178(w) x 338(h) x 215(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 5kg

R-34C

DRIVE UNITS: 4 x 3.5in IMG woofers; 1 x 1in Tractrix tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Ported **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 82Hz-21kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 96dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 100W **DIMENSIONS:** 660(w) x 133(h) x 157(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 5.6kg

R-41SA

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 4.5in IMG woofer; 1 x 1in Tractrix tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Ported **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** N/A **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** N/A **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 50W **DIMENSIONS:** 146(w) x 180(h) x 331(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 2.7kg

R-100SW (subwoofer)

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 10in forward-firing IMG woofer **ENCLOSURE:** Ported **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 32Hz-120Hz **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 150W **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 318(w) x 368(h) x 417(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 10.9kg **FEATURES:** LFE input; stereo phono input; volume, crossover and phase control

PARTNER WITH



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE – FALLOUT: Another fine slice of high-octane espionage fun arrives on Blu-ray with an immersive Dolby Atmos soundmix that consistently peppers the listening position with crisp FX. See p94 for our review.

that the passive speakers are as sensitive as they are and that high listening levels are easy to achieve, it does a brilliant job of keeping pace. Often, any review of a package around this price will suggest looking at a woofer from a dedicated manufacturer, but I'm not sure that's applicable here.

Bang for your buck

It's hard to think of systems that come in at a similar price that offer demonstrably more bang for your buck than this one. Klipsch's cabinets aren't small and their rear-ported designs will work best with the speakers given a little space, but their sensitivity and exceptional integration will win many over. There's scale and impact here that ensures a cinematic performance, and when the sonic results are this convincing, aesthetic concerns (such as the driver colour and angular design of the upfiring models) begin to fade away ■

HCC VERDICT



Klipsch Reference 5.1.2 system

→ £2,000 → www.klipsch.co.uk

WE SAY: Klipsch's Atmos array sounds big and bold but cohesive too and represents excellent value for money. It's not a style system, though...

2. The R-100SW offers standard LFE/stereo phono connections

2





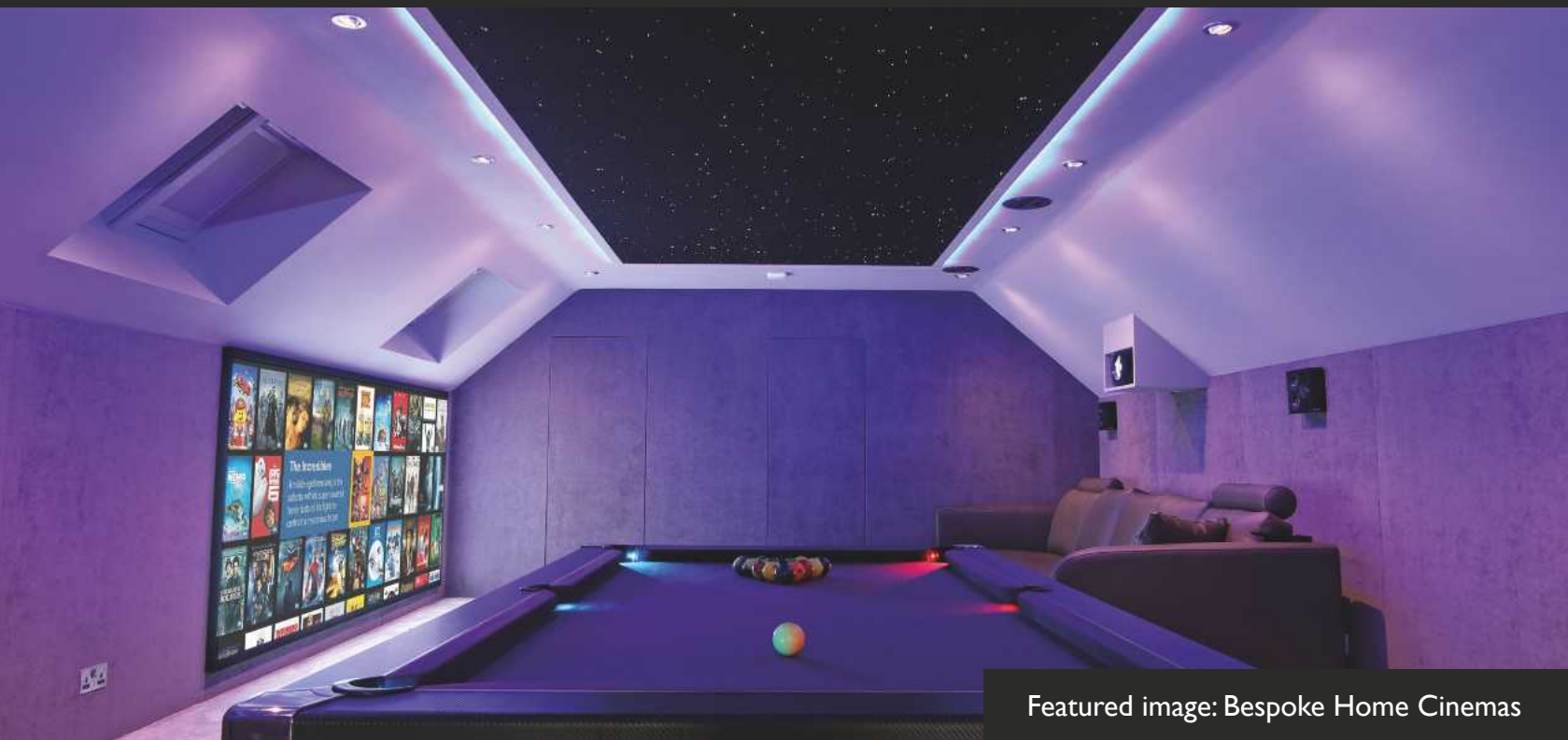
HOME TECH

GALLERY

www.hometechgallery.com

TOP 10 CINEMA DESIGN AND INSTALL COMPANIES

A professionally designed and installed home cinema system
is much greater than the sum of its parts.



Featured image: Bespoke Home Cinemas

North

Bespoke Home Cinemas

www.bespokehomecinemas.co.uk
0113 266 0101

SONA

www.sona.technology
01625 541442

EIRE

Active Room Technologies

www.activerooms.ie
(+353) 01 906 5346

Midlands & Wales

Custom Sound & Vision

www.customsoundandvision.co.uk
0121 453 5725

SouthWest

ConnectedWorks

www.connected.works
0117 214 0115

The Smart Home Co

www.tshc.co.uk
01872 859047

SouthEast

Cinema Rooms

www.cinamarooms.com
01245 790855

Just Add Popcorn

www.justaddpopcorn.co.uk
01424 870763

London

Homeplay

www.homeplay.tv
01932 781327

Tateside

www.tateside.com
0207 803 0923

PROUD SPONSOR

keene

30 years of making AV happen

AV INFO

PRODUCT:

3LCD 4K Enhanced projector

POSITION:

The first of Epson's Pro UHD models, positioned beneath the EH-TW9400

PEERS:

Acer V6820i; Optoma UHD51

1. The PJ supports HDR10, but not HLG

It looks and performs like a high-end PJ, but Epson's EH-TW7400 appeals to **Steve May's** wallet too

Epson strikes enhanced gold



'Badges? We don't need no (stinking) badges!' So declared Mexican bandit Gold Hat (Alfonso Bedoya) in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. He clearly wasn't an AV fan. We all love badges. And there's no shortage on Epson's latest projector, the EH-TW7400: 3LCD, 3D, 4K Enhancement, HDR and Pro UHD. The latter is a new one on me. But that's fine. The more the merrier.

One of two new Epson models so anointed (perhaps optimistically, given that they're not native 4K), the EH-TW7400 is the entry point for this new appellation, and a replacement for last year's lookalike EH-TW7300.

Built around Epson's stock-in-trade 3LCD image engine, this projector offers more brightness and greater contrast than its predecessor. It claims a dynamic contrast ratio up to 200,000:1, and uses pixel-shifting wizardry to present a 2160p image. The projector is also able to read HDR10 metadata, although as with all beamers, particularly at this price point, there's a limit to just how much it can do with it onscreen.

The model is larger than Epson's current EH-TW6700/6800 Full HD series, so don't plan on using one for impromptu screenings from a coffee table. It's unapologetically about home theatre, and warrants a permanent installation.

As we've come to expect from the brand, build quality is excellent. The matt white chassis features a centrally-positioned lens, with a flashy bronze accent, and cooling vents sit either side of the automated shutter.

The backlit remote control is a standard Epson accessory; large but easy to wield in a darkened room. If you want on-body control, there are menu buttons hidden behind a sliding door to the side.

Connections are recessed around the back. These include two HDMI inputs, but only one is blessed with HDCP 2.2 copy protection for use with UHD sources, which is a bit of a disappointment. Furthermore, 4K/60p 18Gbps transmission is off the menu too (it's reserved for the step-up EH-TW9400 series).

Other connections are USB, VGA, RS-232C and Ethernet for pro use. A 12V trigger is provided for screen control.

Motorised optics lend the EH-TW7400 a premium edge. A 2.1x optical zoom, powered focus and powered lens shift means you can line the image up and snap it perfectly into focus with just the remote. Generous lens shift options are +/- 96.3 per cent vertical and +/- 47.1 per cent horizontal.

Far sighted

The throw ratio of 1.35-2.84:1 is also expansive. The PJ will cast images up to 300in, and you'll need a minimum projection distance of 3m to fill a 100in screen. For advanced theatre installs, there are ten memory slots to store different screen aspect ratios.

Getting to grips with this Epson is fairly straightforward. In addition to the usual tabbed text box menu, seen on countless Epson projectors previously, there's a Home button which presents a fully graphical screen detailing source inputs, with shortcuts for auto iris, display presets, power and menu.

The brightness rating is a punchy 2,600 Lumens, suggesting making this capable of use in rooms with some levels of moderate ambient light (although for the best results, it deserves full light control). Lamp life is also

'Motorised optics lend the PJ a premium edge. You can snap the image perfectly into focus with just the remote'

impressive, while obviously down on the laser/LED competition. Epson quotes 5,000 hours in Eco mode, saying this translates to a movie a day for seven years (give or take the odd blockbuster).

Most vitally, image quality here is tremendous. I don't mind admitting that I'm a fan of 3LCD. Single-chip DLP projectors may have the edge when it comes to absolute sharpness, principally because there are no alignment issues, but 3LCD isn't subject to rainbow fringing, and colour fidelity tends to be excellent.

Picture presets are Dynamic, Bright Cinema, Natural, Cinema and Digital Cinema. I found the Cinema mode a little too dull for most source content, but Natural, Digital Cinema and Bright Cinema all provide satisfactory jumping off points for movie and TV shows.

But given the sleight-of-hand processing employed by Epson, just how convincing is its UHD presentation? ➤





3

Well, when fed native 4K resolution tests, the projector's pixel-shifting delivers a surprising simulacrum. I noted some twitching artefacts with high-frequency detail, but on non-test chart material this wasn't an issue.

The projector offers five levels of 4K Enhancement. 1 and 2 are quite subtle, but upwards of these it becomes incrementally more aggressive. The greyscale takes on a reddish tinge from preset 3 (although again this isn't immediately apparent with real-world footage). I came to the conclusion that 4K Enhancement on preset 2 was the sweet spot, but I did continue to tinker during the audition.

Bulletproof performance

The EH-TW7400 proves a great partner for Sky Q's standard dynamic range UHD content. Sky One cop show *Bulletproof* looks crisp and cinematic; colour handling is lush, and there's no shortage of detail and gloss.

4K Blu-rays look occasionally sharper, but what of the EH-TW7400's HDR handling? To compare 4K disc and SDR 4K broadcast content, I looped the opening sequence of *The Dark Tower*, one from UHD Blu-ray, the other UHD from Sky Q. There were differences, but not how you might imagine.

The Stephen King adaptation opens with kids playing in a sunlit field. The green expanse, with white roundabout, is surrounded by chalets; a blue sky with white clouds reveals two moons. There's no overt shortage of pop in either the Sky or 4K disc image, however the HDR picture reveals better black level detail and contrast. An aerial shot of the green confirms superior delineation of the sunlit grass. A tousled-haired kid in a striped tee-shirt looks up. His face, half in shadow, has almost photographic depth, cheek bones and hair clearly defined with subtle shadow detail. The Sky Q SDR presentation has a slightly higher, uniform average picture level, with the result that the same face doesn't have the same naturalistic look. In every scene, the Epson found and displayed more near-dark detail from the HDR disc, without sacrificing bright highlights, which, in truth, appeared uniform across both sources. The HDR skill here is to open up the contrast range, not to sear your eyeballs.

SPECIFICATIONS

3D: Yes. Active 3D (glasses optional) **4K:** Yes. 2160p via 4K Enhancement
HDR: Yes. HDR10 **CONNECTIONS:** 2 x HDMI inputs; VGA input; RS-232C; Ethernet; 12V trigger; USB **BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED):** 2,400 Lumens 'colour light output'
CONTRAST (CLAIMED): 200,000:1 **ZOOM:** 2.1x **DIMENSIONS:** 520(w) x 193(h) x 450(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 11.2kg

FEATURES: 3LCD technology; lamp life rated at 5,000 hours (eco), 3,500 (dynamic); fan noise rated at 32dB (normal), 20dB (economy); Dynamic, Bright Cinema, Natural, Cinema and Digital Cinema picture presets; 1.35-2.84:1 throw ratio; frame interpolation; motorized zoom and focus; vertical lens shift +/-96.3%; horizontal lens shift +/-47.1%; ten-position lens memory; HDCP 2.2 on one HDMI

PARTNER WITH



PURE THEATRE CR200: Use the Epson's RS-232C/12V control to spark this ceiling-recessed projector screen into action. Pure Theatre offers diagonal sizes from 68in to 131in, in 16:9 or 2.35:1 ratio (plus a custom option), with prices beginning at around £950.

To help maximise detail in sports content, etc, the projector offers frame interpolation. However, image smoothing doesn't appear to work with 4K material. And if your source component is upscaling HD to 2160p, it won't work either.

Interpolation is available in Low, Normal or High flavours. In Low there are no motion artefacts, while pans are smooth but blurry. Both Normal and High introduce obvious motion artefacts, but do increase the levels of image detail retained. So of the options, Low is the better choice. That said, I would probably opt to leave my sources outputting 4K (native or upscaled) and sacrifice Epson's interpolation tool.

Despite this unit's size, running noise is pleasingly low. In Eco the EH-TW7400 purrs quietly, and wouldn't draw attention when surrounded by sound. However, opt for Dynamic mode, and you'll trigger a commensurate increase in fan noise.

A total treasure

For the cash, the EH-TW7400 is in many ways an absolute better. It delivers bright, contrasty images with stable black levels and a pixel density that replicates the look of celluloid. Feel free to debate Epson's 4K Enhancement proposition (I'm not seeing the same level of clean detail here as observed on native 4K projectors from Sony and JVC), but the unequivocal truth is that this is gloriously cinematic, and that ultimately trumps resolution concerns.

More of a concern, however, is that HLG HDR playback isn't a feature here (again, it's offered on the EH-TW9400). Those after a PJ for the long term may consider this a reason not to buy – even with HLG currently in short supply. Even taking that into account, the EH-TW7400 is a total treasure, a proper home theatre projector at a sensible price ■

3. Power and source buttons (plus menu keys behind a sliding flap) are mounted on the Epson's side

HCC VERDICT



Epson EH-TW7400

→ £2,200 → www.epson.co.uk

WE SAY: Offering 2160p pixel density and better than HD resolution, this big Epson is fabulously filmic. A largescreen thriller... provided you've got the room.

Klipsch
REFERENCE

next generation

REFERENCE™

series with **DOLBY ATMOS**

AVAILABLE NOW
FROM JUST
£220



90° X 90° Tractrix Horn

Klipsch's exclusive Tractrix® horn technology delivers the power, detail and emotion of the live music experience with the cleanest, most natural sound possible.

Spun Copper IMG Woofer

Injection Molded Graphite (IMG) woofer cones are exceptionally light while being extremely rigid - providing remarkable low frequency response, with minimal cone breakup and distortion.

Home Cinema System

Klipsch's Reference Base home cinema speaker range offers a complete hemisphere of rich, detailed sound and at the greatest value possible. Your music and movies will never sound the same.



Distributed by Henley Audio

T: +44 (0) 1235 511 166 | E: sales@henleyaudio.co.uk | W: www.henleyaudio.co.uk



Potent power will elevate your system

Steve Withers finds out if this new seven-channel Class AB power amplifier makes an iota of difference in his cinema room

IF THE NAME IOTA isn't familiar to you, then you're not alone. To be honest, I'd never heard of the company before this seven-channel power amplifier arrived at my door. A bit of digging later, I discovered it's a British electronics brand, based in Middlesbrough, focused on the design and construction of stereo and home cinema hardware.

It combines its engineers and technicians with 'efficient production' and a streamlined sales infrastructure (you can buy directly from the manufacturer), to offer well-made and competitively priced products. The range currently includes speakers, a seven-channel AV processor, and the AVXP1 seven-channel power amp reviewed here.

The price seems right

If IOTA's goal is to deliver unbeatable price/performance, then it's certainly off to a good start as far as this multichannel amp is concerned. You can buy the AVXP1 for £1,050, which is reasonable for seven channels of solid grunt.

The company hasn't skimped on the build quality either, with the kind of weapons-grade construction that I like to see in a higher-end product. In fact it scores a definite nine out of ten on the bad back scale, weighing in at a hernia-

inducing 30.3kg – double the heft of Emotiva's slimmer seven-channel BasX A-700 model [see *HCC* #278].

As you'd expect from a power amp there's a simplicity to its design, with a minimalist metal construction and a matt black finish. Aside from the company's name, the only thing on the front is an illuminated power switch. This glows red when off, white when on, and if there's a problem it blinks.

There's a bit more going on around the back, with seven sets of phono and balanced XLR inputs. Between each of the two types of connection is a little selection switch that you flick, depending on which one you're using.

In addition there are good-quality binding posts for the seven amplifier channels, a 12V trigger, and a 3.5mm jack for synchronising the amp's front light with IOTA's AVX1 AV processor.

The spec sheet is brief but makes for impressive reading, with the Class AB amplification claiming power figures of 7 x 110W (8 ohm) and 7 x 170W (4 ohm) – stepping up to 150W (8 ohm) and 250W (4 ohm) when driving two-channel systems. If IOTA is to be believed, and its numbers appear realistic, that's a serious amount of aural potential.

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
Seven-channel power amplifier

POSITION:
Currently IOTA's only power amp separate

PEERS:
Emotiva XPA-7;
Marantz MM8077;
NAD M27

For the purposes of this review, I fed the IOTA from Yamaha's CX-A5200 AV processor [see HCC #292], using my reference M&K Sound S150/S150T speakers in a seven-channel setup. This is the most likely configuration but even if you don't have an AV processor, this powerful amp offers other possibilities. For those with an AV receiver with seven-channel pre-outs, the AVXP1 provides the opportunity to take full advantage of your existing processing, while beefing up the amplification at the same time. I'll wager this dedicated amp can deliver more sonic slam than the built-in amplification of most receivers.

To test this out I also paired the AVXP1 with my Arcam AVR850, essentially using the latter as a processor. With its seven channels of Class G power the Arcam is no slouch in this department, so it should make for an interesting experiment...

Picking up the pace

Soon after firing up the CX-A5200/AVXP1 combo I realised IOTA's claimed power numbers are based on real-world performance, rather than simply driving the amp to destruction and using the measurement taken right before it blew up. I was pleased to discover it also had no problems driving my M&K Sound speakers, all of which are rated at 4 ohms.

I was immediately impressed by the sense of space and scale that it imparted to the epic soundscapes of Suede's new album *The Blue Hour*. There was a simple reason for this: headroom. The amp had power to spare, transient peaks were delivered with precision and even when I turned the volume up to Glasto levels this beast remained totally unfazed.

With modern multichannel movie soundtracks, where the channels are often used simultaneously to create a more immersive experience, a power amp will prove its worth. A good example is *The House of Flying Daggers* (Blu-ray), and it's justifiably famous drum sequence. As small stones hit drums positioned in a 360-degree soundfield, the amplification needs to be both tight and responsive, keeping pace with the action as sounds bounce from drum to drum, and thus from one channel to another.

The Yamaha/IOTA pairing delivered this with wonderful speed and precision, rendering effects with crystal clarity and producing a gutsy sense of impact. There was also a nice balance to the system, especially when a bowl of stones is thrown in the air, and sounds emanate simultaneously from every speaker, energising the entire room.

The Ultra HD Blu-ray of *Interstellar* boasts another dynamic mix, particularly the scene where the protagonists try to escape the gravitational pull of a black hole. With this setup, as the spaceship struggled to pull free, it sounded as though the entire room was being torn apart by extreme gravitational forces. As the fuselage rattled, the AVXP1 was able to maintain power to all the speakers evenly, helping to create a cohesive soundstage. There was a refined quality to the sound that I really liked, allowing me to pick out all the small details in the mix, plus an immediacy to dramatic shifts in volume.

Switching to the Arcam AVR850 revealed that despite its relatively inexpensive nature, the AVXP1 is able to complement even the best processing. Watching *Unstoppable* on Blu-ray, this particular pairing handled the aggressive sonics of this runaway train

SPECIFICATIONS

POWER OUTPUT (CLAIMED): 7 x 110W (8 ohm, all channels driven, 0.06% THD)
CONNECTIONS: 7 x phono inputs; 7 x balanced XLR inputs; 7 x speaker terminals; 12V trigger
DIMENSIONS: 431(w) x 480(d) x 19.8(h)mm **WEIGHT:** 30.3kg

FEATURES: High-output toroidal transformer; Class AB output; binding posts accept 4mm banana plugs/heavy-gauge speaker cables; dimmer port

PARTNER WITH



IOTAVX AVXP1: Object-based audio doesn't feature here, but otherwise this £700 7.1-channel processor is up-to-spec HDMI-wise, with 4K HDR-enabled inputs/output. Balanced XLR connections and styling match IOTA's amp.

movie with a massive dynamic range that was both precise and responsive.

Viewing the same scenes using the AVR850's built-in amplification revealed the benefits of its Class G implementation, which is essentially a hybrid of Class A and Class AB. I felt the Arcam's own power revealed improved transparency when compared to the IOTA, thus retaining a better sense of reality. Having said that, the AVXP1 gave an excellent account of itself and the greater efficiency of Class AB obviously makes it much cheaper.

The IOTA's performance with the AVR850 is interesting because it raises the possibility of matching the amp with Arcam's more affordable AVR390. This includes exactly the same processing, features, and Dirac Live room EQ as the more expensive AVR850, but lacks the Class G grunt. The addition of the IOTA would likely raise the performance of the AVR390 to new heights, resulting in a tasty combo for just over three grand.

So whether your system includes an AV processor or receiver, as long as it has decent processing and seven-channel pre-outs, IOTA's AVXP1 should elevate its performance without breaking the bank. An unflashy but effective upgrade path ■

1. The front-panel design takes 'minimal' to another level

2. All seven channels link to phono and balanced XLR inputs

HCC VERDICT



IOTA Electronics IOTAVX AVXP1

→ £1,050 → hifipilot.uk / www.iotaenterprises.co.uk

WE SAY: If you have a decent multichannel AV processor or receiver, this affordable seven-channel power amp is an effective way of elevating your system's performance.



Echo bass boost

Amazon's wireless subwoofer may ape the styling of its Echo speakers but isn't the chatty type. It does like to throw its weight around, though, says **Steve May**



The Echo Sub uses a down-firing 6in woofer

IF YOU'VE BEEN hankering after a more fulsome sound from your Amazon Echo smart speakers, the £120 Echo Sub will sort you out. Not a smart speaker *per se*, it's designed to partner existing Echoes to bolster bass performance.

This subwoofer has a relatively large footprint, but isn't unattractive. The circular enclosure is wrapped in a dark charcoal fabric, echoing the style of the latest Plus and Dot devices. There's only the single colour choice available, but don't rule out other colourways appearing over time.

Unlike other Echo speakers, there's no near-field microphone onboard, so you can't engage the Echo Sub in conversation (disappointing if you were hoping Alexa would talk in a deep contralto). It doesn't have the familiar flashing LED interface either,

just a status reset button above the power socket.

Consequently usability is less intuitive than its stablemates, and setup a tad more challenging. It actually took me several attempts to get the Echo Sub online using the Amazon Alexa app,

whereas regular Echo devices typically present no problem.

The sub itself is a sealed design (with an internal four-litre volume) with a 6in downward-facing woofer, firing onto a solid circular base. It's intended to sit on the floor, not too far from the main speaker(s). Best place it close to keep the soundstage intact.

The Echo Sub requires a compatible Echo speaker to work. It can be used in a 1.1 configuration, or 2.1 with paired Echoes performing left/right duties. Be aware that to create a 2.1 system, you'll need third-generation Dots, first- or second-generation Echo Pluses, or second-generation Echoes.

This woofer can't be used with non-Alexa products, nor does it have a 3.5mm/Bluetooth connection.

Renovation required

Curiously, the Echo Sub can't be added to any existing stereo pairing you might have. You'll have to unpair your Alexa devices and then rebuild to accommodate it. An adaptive 50Hz-200Hz low-pass filter automatically copes with whatever Echo speaker you partner it with. Onboard Class D amplification is rated at a punchy 100W.

Once up and running, there's no doubt this subwoofer adds welcome weight to any Echo speaker configuration, but the listening experience varies according to content. It can sound too heavy with speech radio,

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 6in downward-firing driver
ENCLOSURE: Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 30Hz-200Hz **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 100W Class D amplifier
REMOTE CONTROL: No. Via Amazon Alexa app only **DIMENSIONS:** 202(w) x 210(h) x 202(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 4.2kg

FEATURES: Integrated dual-band Wi-Fi; system EQ via Amazon Alexa app (Fire OS, iOS, Android); pairs with compatible Amazon Alexa products (Echo Dot, Echo, Echo Plus, Echo Show); 50Hz-200Hz adaptive automatic low-pass filter

causing mid-range vocals to bump and thump. If you primarily request Alexa to disgorge news and podcasts I suspect you won't get much pleasure from using it.

However, with music, the bolshie beat can be far more infectious. It likes to make a noise. Play *Nomadic*, by Slipknot, and the Echo Sub pulses in delicious anger. A gutsy performer, it's equally at home with dance tracks and reggae, although it's far from nuanced in its bass handling.

Also, don't plan on using a 2.1 config as a soundbar alternative, or as part of a Fire TV sound system. This is dedicated to streaming music only.

As such, it does a solid job filling in the space left untouched by Amazon's smaller boxes, dropping down (with some DSP help) to 30Hz. But it would have been nice to have been able to adjust the EQ setting for the Echo Sub itself; the Alexa app only allows adjustment for grouped speakers *en masse*.

Value added

I love the idea of adding a compact sub to upgrade an Amazon Echo, and to a certain degree this offering fits the bill. It's undeniably well made, and sports great cosmetics. However, usability isn't as polished as other more communicative Echo products, and for all its brawn, it's only passably musical.

In terms of value, though, this new arrival is hard to beat. A 2.1 system built around an Echo Sub and Echo Plus stereo pair is temptingly competitive at £300. Opt to partner it with Amazon's smaller Echo speakers and you'll take the package for just £225. This compares well with more expensive single-box options, including Apple's Homepod (around £320) and the Google Home Max (£400) ■

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
6in wireless subwoofer for Alexa systems

POSITION:
Amazon's first Alexa-compatible Echo subwoofer

PEERS:
Apple Homepod; Yamaha MusicCast SUB 100

HCC VERDICT



Amazon Echo Sub

→ £120 → www.amazon.co.uk

WE SAY: The Echo Sub turns Amazon's smart speakers into a price-competitive 2.1 proposition, but a laboured nature rather limits its musicality.

acer



REDISCOVER HOME CINEMA IN ULTRA HD

Enjoy life-like colours and never worry about lamp burn-out or disposal, with the laser diode light source.



Acer VL7860 Laser 4K UHD Projector

UHD 4K
8.3 Megapixel

isf
ccc

HDR
Compatible

20000
hrs
Laser Lifespan

1.6X
ZOOM RATIO

Rec. 709

Rec. 2020
COMPATIBLE

reddot award 2018
winner

www.acer.co.uk

JBL Tune600BTNC

Ed Selley shuts off the outside world with these closed-back noise-cancelling cans

THE COMBINATION OF Bluetooth and active noise cancelling in a pair of headphones is a desirable one for 'block the world out' ability. With JBL's Tune600BTNCs, you get an on-ear set built around a brace of 32mm drivers, rated at 20Hz-20kHz, and delivering what the brand calls its 'Pure Bass Sound.'

The enclosures are closed-back and noise leakage is commendably low. If you wish, the cans work as a traditional passive design via a supplied 3.5mm to 2.5mm cable.

If you want to go wireless, though, the Tune600BTNCs are fitted with Bluetooth v4.1, which is a reasonably up-to-date implementation – but unfortunately aptX transmission isn't present.

The noise-cancelling function is also simple. Rather than varying levels of noise cancelling, let alone wizardry like voice passthrough, you get a single button that

triggers the setting between off and on.

If you want more user interaction, you'll generally have to shop higher than the £85 price point here.

These do feel well assembled for the money, though, and are a comfortable fit.

The cans motor through the climatic sequence of *Dr Strange* (Blu-ray) with a good sense of scale and LF impact while also creating a reasonable feeling



Battery life is rated at a maximum of 30 hours

of space for a closed-back design, and this overall presentation stays very similar when using the Bluetooth input.

Unwanted background noise is well-contained even when not using the battery-draining noise cancelling mode, although that feature is pleasantly effective. It doesn't handle sudden external noises as well as some more expensive designs, but its impact on the headphone's overall performance is unobtrusive.

For £85, these are good value. They're capable of a more than respectable performance when used conventionally and while the Bluetooth and noise cancelling features are basic, this ensures ease-of-use. They look quite natty too ■

HCC VERDICT



JBL Tune600BTNC

→ £85 → uk.jbl.com

WWW.IBOXSTYLE.COM/£60

iBox Ellipsis

This voice assistant speaker is the definition of plug-n-play, says **Mark Craven**

THE ALEXA-POWERED ELLIPSIS from iBox melds device and plug into a single unit – the idea being that you don't actually have to find shelf/desktop real estate to mount the speaker. It's aimed, therefore, at Alexa devotees wanting to add points of interaction all around their house (plugged into a socket at the top of the stairs, perhaps). It also might

appeal as a discreet way to introduce Alexa to an AV setup, as it's one less trailing wire to worry about.

The bulbous shape of the Ellipsis means it can be installed in a double-gang wall socket without blocking the neighbouring plug, but it's not a hidden gizmo as such. I also found it a bit wobbly when depressing the volume keys.

A front-facing LED ring mirrors the approach of Amazon's Echo speakers, changing colour through blue, white and orange to denote status. Beyond that, there are just mic mute, volume and 'action' buttons. There's no 3.5mm or Bluetooth output option, as found on Amazon's models.

Either of the latter would have been welcome given the suggested £60 price (you may find it selling for less), as the speaker's in-built 1.5in full-range driver (rated at just 2W) doesn't really impress. It's fine, while unrefined, for Alexa's chat or talk radio, but call up a music station on TuneIn (the iBox app provides a 10-preset option if you want to use your 'phone/tablet) or your streaming music platform, and it sounds obviously thin, presenting lo-fi facsimiles of your favourite tracks.

Audiophile pleasure isn't what the Ellipsis is all about of course. The main thrust here is the design/form factor. In that regard it can be considered a success. Depending on your own system, it might be just what you need ■

The speaker uses a single full-range driver



HCC VERDICT



iBox Ellipsis

→ £60 → www.iboxstyle.com



VPL-VW270ES / VPL-VW570ES /
VPL-VW870ES

Sony 4K Certified Showrooms

Activate Audio Visual Ltd

Glasgow | 0844 570 7027

Audio Affair

Birmingham | 0121 224 7300

Audio T Ltd

Southampton | 023 802 52827

AV Elements

Essex | 0208 133 7680

Avolution

Guernsey | 01481 727 335

B and O Newcastle

Newcastle | 0191 230 5551

E.T. Home Cinema

Mexborough | 07931 539 197

Evolve Audio Visual Ltd

Maidenhead | 07949 731 136

Grahams HiFi

London | 0207 226 5500

Hi Fi Corner

Edinburgh | 0131 557 1873

HiFi Cinema

Reading | 0118 982 0402

HiFi Lounge Ltd

Bedfordshire | 01767 448 121

Infidelity

Surrey | 0208 943 3530

James Morrow Ltd

Edinburgh | 0131 229 8777

London Home Cinema

London | 0208 370 1820

Loud and Clear Ltd

Glasgow | 0141 221 0221

Martins HiFi

Norwich | 01603 627 010

Niche Audio Visual

Manchester | 01565 648 219

PJ HiFi

Guildford | 01483 304 756

Projector Point

Kingston upon Thames | 0208 614 4113

Pure Theatre

Telford | 01952 898 533

Rayleigh HiFi

Southend | 01702 435 255

Revolve CI

Weston Supermare | 01934 823 864

Richer Sounds

London | 0333 900 0093

Robert Taussig

London | 0207 487 3455

Sevenoaks Sound and Vision

Kent | 01732 775 632

SMC Custom Intallations

Shrewsbury | 01743 234 945

Sound Gallery

High Wycombe | 01494 531 682

Soundcraft Ltd

Kent | 01233 624 441

Stone Audio

Poole | 01202 630 066

Stuart Westmoreland

Leicester | 01664 502 600

TV and Video Direct

Bolton | 01204 395 999

Wall of Sound

York | 01904 704 107



PYRAMID

We create beautiful, award winning cinemas

Our team of expert Designers & Engineers will create your dream theatre from start to finish using the very best acoustics & fabric treatments, furniture & lighting, alongside industry leading cinema brands.

Visit our Devon showroom* to experience the only dedicated Home Cinema & Integration facility in the region, c/w 7.2.4 Dolby Atmos, 4k projection and astonishing sound

*By Appointment Only



2018



Offices in London & Devon - Nationwide coverage
www.thepyramidgroup.co.uk



CEDIA™ MEMBER



@thepyramidgroupuk



@thepyramidgroupuk



Pyramid_AV



Digital Copy

Plastic is no longer fantastic, but that means **Mark Craven** is more worried than ever about what to do with his DVD detritus. So take his DTV sequels off his hands before they get burned

THE BBC'S NATURAL history documentary *Blue Planet II* has been credited with kickstarting a new understanding amongst the public of the widespread plastic pollution affecting our oceans, and has led to the Collins Dictionary declaring 'single-use plastic' its 'word of the year' for 2018 (it's not technically a word, but I'll let it off).

Anyone who watched the doc (and if you missed it on TV you can pick up the excellent Ultra HD Blu-ray release) will know it was powerful stuff. The series' final episode, *Our Blue Planet*, culminated in Sir David Attenborough issuing a plea: 'We are at a unique stage in our history. Surely we have a responsibility to care for our blue planet? The future of humanity, and indeed all life on Earth, now depends on us.'

The irony, of sorts, is that *Blue Planet II* has gone on to be one of BBC Worldwide's best-selling DVD/Blu-ray releases. These silver slices of physical media, made mainly from polycarbonate plastic, don't count as single-use plastics – they can, obviously, be watched more than once – so haven't drawn the ire as much as drinks straws and water bottles. But what to do with them when you don't want them?

Take my physical media, please

I expect all of us have discs (CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays) that we no longer use. I know I do, ranging from CDs now replicated by subscription-music streaming services, to DVD movies now updated to Blu-ray.

In the old days (okay, 10 years ago) I used to occasionally sell such discs second-hand, both online and at high street 'exchange' shops. Other people wanted my junk. Now, though, it appears the bottom has fallen out of this market. When

Mrs Craven did a table-top sale recently, I loaded her up with a couple of boxes of DVDs in the hope she could shift them, but none sold. I then looked at what second-hand shop CEX would offer, and was miffed to discover **my Special Edition two-disc DVD version of The Mummy Returns is apparently worth 1p**. It's not a classic of the action-adventure genre but it's not that bad.

Charity shops are another alternative, but I know from previous experience that they won't simply take everything you have to offer (*Wild Things 3* was resolutely rejected by my local Barnardo's – I blame the saucy cover art). Nor do I want to just pass the burden of failing to flog a DVD copy of US history documentary *The Fog of War* from myself to someone else.

This is why I recently looked into recycling. Can my discs be put to good use in a way that would make Sir Dave happy?

It turns out that, where I live, it's a possibility. Polycarbonates can't be thrown into my kerbside recycling bin but can be taken to my local tip, where they're then carted off with all the other rubbish to an energy-from-waste plant, generating electricity from my *Star Wars* DVD releases, and a better carbon footprint than just burying them in the ground.

I found this fairly reassuring – it provides me with an endgame to my physical media hoarding – but burning things still doesn't feel like the perfect solution.

The term 'death of physical media' gets bandied around a lot – see Anton van Beek's column over the page for more on this – but it might just be that what finally kills off our love of discs is the fact you can't effectively recycle them... ■

*Are you still hoarding unused physical media?
Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com*

Mark Craven isn't sure one reuse suggestion for CDs/DVDs (use them as drinks coasters) is a goer – unless he was opening the UK's biggest pub





Film Fanatic

Poor marketing of Blu-ray, believes **Anton van Beek**, is the only reason why standalone DVD players still appear in shops. But the standard-def format's days might now be over

IT'S ALL OVER. Physical media is officially dead. Don't believe me? Well, I can only presume that you didn't read any newspapers, watch the TV news or listened to the radio in late October. If you did you would have learned that John Lewis is... wait for it... going to stop selling DVD players once it has flogged the stock it currently holds.

Forget that *The Greatest Showman* shifted almost half-a-million discs during its first week on sale in the UK earlier this year. What really matters is that a high street retailer specialising in premium products has reported a 40 per cent year-on-year fall in sales of DVD players and decided not to bother with them any more.

John Lewis' decision doesn't sound all that shocking, really. After all, DVD players have been warming shop shelves in Europe for two decades and in that time the format has been superseded by a trio of more advanced disc-based home formats.

But from the way the story was reported in the mainstream press here in the UK, you'd think it was the death-knell for the entire physical media business. Admittedly, John Lewis didn't help matters here, attributing the 40 per cent drop in DVD player sales to 'the rise in popularity of streaming services' in the latest instalment of its annual John Lewis & Partners Retail Report (in other news: trouser press sales are down 36 per cent, but thong sales are up 72 per cent thanks to 'the *Love Island* effect').

That was all it took for TV presenters who should know better (I'm looking at you, BBC News Channel tech show *Click*) to start consigning physical media to the dustbin of history and for radio DJs to start asking listeners what they should do with all of the DVDs they've collected over the years.

Blimey! If only there was another disc-based home entertainment format on the market with

players that are backwards-compatible with DVD. Okay, I'm being a little disingenuous here. Many of the original reports did point out (usually somewhere near the bottom) that John Lewis would continue to sell Blu-ray players – and that these could also be used to play DVDs. But when the story got picked up and regurgitated elsewhere by other outlets, this frequently went unmentioned in favour of playing up the 'streaming killed DVD' angle.

Missing the message

One aspect of the story everybody seemed to ignore, however, was this: why would anybody in 2018 want to buy a standalone DVD player anyway and – perhaps more importantly – why the heck are AV manufacturers still making them?

When it comes to the latter point, I must admit I'm baffled. No matter how big the market for DVD spinners may have been, the tiny price points they command now must surely have made profits almost negligible.

As for why consumers might still want to buy a DVD player, I firmly believe it's because, right from the days of the Blu-ray format's launch, the industry has done a terrible job of communicating that you can still watch your old DVDs on a new BD player.

Don't believe me? Recently a family friend sought my advice about buying a DVD deck. When I asked why she wanted one, she explained that she'd bought several new DVDs to watch while her husband was watching TV. However, he always insisted on watching his shows in the conservatory, which is where the DVD player is located. This left her with the living room TV, which only had a Blu-ray player wired up to it... ■

Can you remember when you last bought a DVD player? Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com

Anton van Beek is mostly surprised that John Lewis has actually still been selling DVD players next to its extensive range of 4K TVs



EDIFIER®



"Separate speakers give a more tangible stereo effect than most sound bars and overall this somewhat retro set up sounds good"

- Home Cinema Choice



S350DB | NEXT GENERATION 2.1 SPEAKER WITH WIRELESS SUBWOOFER

This 2.1 active speaker features a 3.5-inch aluminium diaphragm subwoofer and 3/4 inch titanium dome tweeters combined with a built-in amplifier.



WWW.EDIFIER.COM

#APASSIONFORSOUND



In The Mix

When it comes to some commercial cinemas, **Jon Thompson**'s mantra is 'super-calibration-needed-pictures-are-atrocious.' But the arrival of Dolby Cinema has cheered him up

CINEMA CAN CONJURE powerful memories; the buildings in the past have been places of dreams. For myself it was the Gaumont cinema in Birmingham in the 1970s, the largest screen in Europe at the time. Now, thankfully after a lapse of so many years, we are building big screens again.

After the Gaumont closed in the 1980s and was replaced by a bland office block I had to find a new spiritual home. I'd just started in this industry, and that home soon became the Odeon Leicester Square. I became good friends with the chief projectionist, Nigel Wolland MBE, who to this day is possibly the greatest projectionist of all time, doing more premieres and Royal films than anyone.

Over the last 30-odd years I have loved the Odeon Leicester Square. It's a place where you can feel its history. Its refurbishment, due to be finished before Christmas, was going to have to be something special. It seems Odeon has pulled it off, and it should retain its crown as the finest cinema in Europe and maybe the planet – with Dolby Cinema too.

I'm a huge fan of Dolby Cinema. I think it was the right way to go and has been well thought through. Not only is it a technical specification of sound and picture, it's also about the design and build of the auditorium and foyer, and your journey to the seat. It's a total concept.

Dolby Cinema is Dolby Vision Projection, the next step up from Dolby Vision in the home, and Dolby Atmos. This new Odeon is pushing the latter to the limit, as I'm told it will have 410 Atmos speakers. That means it will likely be the first venue to implement the full 128-channel iteration the professional system is capable of, with true three-way speakers across the board. This is going to be holosonic!

The key to the picture is the DV projector, which is a double-modulated DLP system. In other words,

two projectors glued together, modulating against each other. This gives you a true black. The contrast is rated at 1,000,000:1, and I have measured this and, yes, it's very close – it's not just a manufacturer's claim. OLED, on the other hand, has infinite contrast, but an issue is the huge jump from black to near black, and the noise at that level. Dolby Vision projection delivers a natural graduation from black to the first step near black. To meet this standard the design of the auditorium has to hit an exact specification to give you the contrast the system can deliver.

The other killer feature of the Dolby Vision projector is that it has a massive colour space thanks to its '6P' (RGCMBY) laser light engine. Forget BT.2020 or BT.2100, this colour space is actually slightly larger than those specs and the projector can achieve a full 100 per cent of it. Okay, so most films are still really only mastered to DCI-P3, but when the Dolby Vision master is made the grade is tweaked to utilise this expanded colour.

So with the blackest blacks and the most vivid colour, **you have a projection system for the 21st century**. Digital Cinema was a 20th century standard. Dolby Vision Projection is perhaps what it should have been from day one. It's leaps ahead of anything you can get in the home, which is what the industry needs to be competitive.

From what I understand the Odeon Leicester Square will reopen on December 20th with Disney's *Mary Poppins Returns* (pictured). I've seen it a few times already and I will say it shows off Dolby Atmos and Dolby Vision to great effect. This will be well worth seeing at the UK's first Dolby Cinema. Maybe plan an evening off from your home theatre ■

Are you excited by new developments at commercial cinemas? Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com

When he's not in his screening room, **Jon Thompson** tweets about Hollywood gossip, movie-making and digital mastering at @johnnyfocal



- STORES NATIONWIDE
- DEMONSTRATION ROOMS
- EXPERT IMPARTIAL ADVICE
- UNRIVALLED PRODUCT RANGE

SEVENoaks
SOUND & VISION

OFFERING THE VERY BEST SOUND, VISION AND SERVICE FOR OVER 45 YEARS



ONLINE
www.ssav.com

INSTORE
stores nationwide

SMARTHOME
www.ssav.com/smarthome

BLUESOUND 2i

NEW

Bluesound Generation 2i is the next iteration of the Bluesound product lineup. Building on the strengths and success of the Gen 2 platform, Gen 2i boasts several technological updates that will be sure to add to the excitement and demand for these popular products.

AirPlay 2

AirPlay 2 adds a whole new dimension to the world of streaming possibilities in the Bluesound eco-system. With AirPlay 2, you can stream just about any sound from your iPhone or iPad to a Gen 2i Player. As long as you have at least one Gen 2i Player, any AirPlay-enabled iOS App is now a potential source for your Bluesound eco-system.

TWO-WAY BLUETOOTH

Gen 2i contains Bluesound's most advanced take on Bluetooth to date - two-way Bluetooth, featuring both Receive and Transmit functionality. This not only allows users to wirelessly stream from a device but also to transmit what your listening to via Bluetooth to a pair of wireless headphones.

aptX HD BLUETOOTH

An enhanced codec that supports 24-bit music quality over Bluetooth. With the ability to support streams up to 24bit/48kHz, streaming to/from an aptX HD compatible device to a Gen 2i Player can provide better-than-CD quality, wirelessly.

DUAL-BAND WIFI

The upgraded WiFi chipset technology in Bluesound Players can take advantage of the less noisy 5GHz band if needed resulting in faster connection time and fewer interruptions from other network traffic.

PULSE FAMILY AMPLIFICATION

The all-new, custom-designed digital amplifiers in the Pulse 2i and Pulse Mini 2i effectively double the available power used to drive these speakers. Improved bass response and more powerful sonic landscapes are the new norm in Gen 2i.



SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO).

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 12/12/2018. E&OE



Pay by Finance

www.ssav.com

£2699



ARCAM • FMJ AVR550 • AV RECEIVER

Dolby Atmos 7.1.4 capable AV receiver that is equally at home with high resolution surround sound or two-channel music.
Also Available: ARCAM FMJ AVR390 & FMJ AVR850

NEW

£899



DENON • AVR-X3500H • AV RECEIVER

7.2-channel receiver supporting Dolby Atmos, DTS:X and DTS Virtual:X. 8 HDMI inputs and 2 outputs with HDCP 2.2.
Also Available: DENON AVR-X2500H

NEW

£2349



DENON • AVC-X6500H • AV AMPLIFIER

Enjoy the most complete surround sound experience with latest audio formats Dolby Atmos, DTS:X and Auro-3D built-in.
Also Available: DENON AVC-X8500H

NEW

£999



PIONEER • VSX-LX503 • AV RECEIVER

This highly specified 9.2-channel receiver handles Dolby Atmos and DTS:X soundtracks in 5.2.4 or 7.2.2 configurations.
Also Available: PIONEER VSX-933

£429



SONY • STR-DN1080 • AV RECEIVER

With flexible speaker solutions, DTS:X and Dolby Atmos support, the STR-DN1080 delivers mighty, cinematic surround sound.
Also Available: YAMAHA RX-A680

NEW

£2199



YAMAHA • RX-A3080 • AV RECEIVER

9.2-channel receiver MusicCast, Dolby Atmos and DTS:X support, along with Spotify, Bluetooth, AirPlay.
Also Available: YAMAHA RX-A1080

BLUESOUND • PULSE 2i SOUNDBAR

Not only does the PULSE 2i SOUNDBAR not require a subwoofer to get full natural sound, but it also includes BluOS, Bluesound's powerful wireless multi-room streaming music app, it's also an all-in-one music system that rivals many high-end audio systems.

NEW

£799



White Finish
£899



NEW

£399



SONOS • BEAM SOUNDBAR WITH AMAZON ALEXA VOICE CONTROL

Experience incredible sound while streaming music, watching TV and movies, enjoying podcasts and audiobooks, or playing video games. With easy voice control, five far-field microphones detect your voice from any direction, anywhere in the room.



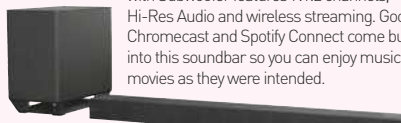
£1939

B&W • MT-60D • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Speaker package combining M-1 speakers with the stunning power and control of a PVID subwoofer. Matt black or white.

SONY • HT-ST5000 SOUNDBAR/SUB

The Sony HT-ST5000 Dolby Atmos Soundbar with Subwoofer features 7.1.2 channels, Hi-Res Audio and wireless streaming. Google Chromecast and Spotify Connect come built into this soundbar so you can enjoy music and movies as they were intended.

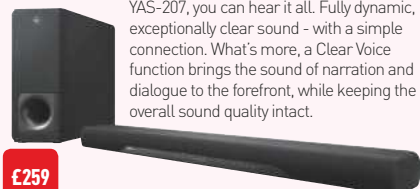


£1199



YAMAHA • YAS-207 SOUNDBAR/SUBWOOFER

Hard to hear the dialog? No more. With the YAS-207, you can hear it all. Fully dynamic, exceptionally clear sound - with a simple connection. What's more, a Clear Voice function brings the sound of narration and dialogue to the forefront, while keeping the overall sound quality intact.



£259

FOCAL • SIB EVO DOLBY ATMOS 5.1.2 SPEAKER PACKAGE

Enjoy Atmos sound effects worthy of cinemas, and created by Dolby, when watching your favourite films at home. Your films will take on a new dimension!



ESSAV .COM



Bowers & Wilkins

600 Series 2 EXCLUSIVE OFFERS

683 S2 £799
SAVE £350

684 S2 £599
SAVE £200

685 S2 £349
SAVE £150 (Price excludes stands)

HTM61 S2 £399
SAVE £150

HTM62 S2 £249
SAVE £100



SPECIAL OFFER



NEW

£6499



JVC • DLA-N5 • 4K D-ILA PROJECTOR

Capable of producing high-definition native 4K resolution images from its all-glass 65 mm diameter lens system. HDR10 content can be projected at optimum quality with Auto Tone Mapping function.



£2999

OPTOMA • UHD65 • 4K DLP PROJECTOR

This projector, incorporating Ultra HD 4K resolution, brings movies to life with thrilling detail, colour and contrast - taking entertainment to the next level.

click & collect

Pay by Finance

www.ssav.com

www.ssav.com/smarthome



SAMSUNG QLED 8K

NEW

FOR THE LATEST TV PROMOTIONS AND PRICES VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM

QE65Q900R • 65" 8K UHD TV

Perfect reality. Be the first to experience the new era with Samsung QLED 8K TV

The Q900R is Samsung's best TV to date that combines real 8K resolution with intelligent AI upscaling to ensure you can immerse yourself in the most incredibly lifelike picture. 8K resolution provides you with 4 times more detail than 4K, thereby offering more clarity than you have ever experienced before. Intelligent AI upscaling technology displays the content you love in 8K so that you can enjoy your favourite TV in a new level of clarity.

Also Available **75 85**

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

BRAVIA OLED



NEW

SONY

KD-65AF9 • 65" OLED 4K UHD TV

See how Sony's latest OLED screen, processor and sound technologies come together for breathtaking 4K HDR TV entertainment. With over 8 million self-illuminating pixels, you'll see perfect blacks, incredible contrast and authentic colour in a blur-free image, with a wide viewing angle. Exclusive to Sony, specially designed actuators invisibly vibrate the TV panel to create amazing sound coming directly from the screen, for a perfect unification of audio and picture.

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY **4K HDR**

Also Available

55

LG OLED TV AI ThinQ

OLED55C8PLA • 55" OLED 4K UHD TV

Featuring LG's processor α9, an Intelligent Processor - Optimized for OLED TV, this exclusive processor allows for clean and sharp images with accurate colour and even more detailed HDR images. OLED pixels create an astonishingly accurate and wide colour range which is presented on the perfect black background only available from self emitting pixels. LG TV can recognise major High Dynamic Range formats such as HLG, HDR 10, Dolby Vision™ and Technicolor. So you get the HDR experience, no matter what HDR entertainment you're enjoying.

Also Available **65 77** FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



NEW

NEW



Panasonic

4K PRO HDR

TX-55FZ802 • 55" OLED 4K UHD TV

The FZ802 OLED Series brings Hollywood Grade Picture & Razor Sharp Style to your home. This elegantly designed TV is a picture powerhouse. It combines the peerless contrast capabilities of 4K HDR OLED screen technology with new Studio Colour HCX picture processing that's been tuned by a Hollywood colourist to ensure you always get to see pictures exactly how their creators intended. The FZ802 supports multiple HDR formats, such as HDR10, HDR10+ and Hybrid Log Gamma.

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

OLED

Also Available

65

SONY

NEW

KD-65XF9005 • 65" 4K UHD TV



FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY **4K HDR**

Also Available

49 55 75

ULTRA HD Blu-ray

NEW **£849**



PANASONIC • DP-UB9000 • 4K UHD BLU-RAY PLAYER
4K UHD Blu-ray player supporting HDR10+, Dolby Vision HDR, Alexa and Google Assistant voice control (via a future software update), and 7.1 channel audio.

ULTRA HD Blu-ray

NEW **£999**



PIONEER • UDP-LX500 • 4K UHD BLU-RAY PLAYER
Designed to satisfy videophiles and audiophiles alike, the UDP-LX500 offers state of the art playback of both Ultra HD Blu-rays and SACDs.

ULTRA HD Blu-ray

NEW **£550**



SONY • UBP-X700 • 4K UHD BLU-RAY PLAYER
Find yourself at the heart of every movie and series. 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray shows everything in finer detail than ever before, so you feel like you're seeing the real thing.

FOR THE LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE

Bristol • 0117 974 3727
Brighton 01273 733338
Bromley 020 8290 1988
Chalfont St Peter • 0845 5046364
Cambridge 01223 304770
Chelsea • 020 7352 9466
Cheltenham • 01242 241171
Epsom • 01372 720720
Exeter • 01392 218895
Guildford 01483 536666

Holborn • 020 7837 7540
Kingston • 020 8547 0717
Loughton 020 8532 0770
Maidstone 01622 686366
Norwich • 01603 767605
Nottingham 0115 988 1703
MOVED Oxford 01865 241773
Reading • 01189 477093
Sevenoaks 01732 459555
Solihull 0121 709 0606

Tunbridge Wells 01892 531543
Wetherby 01937 586886
Witham (Essex) 01376 501733
Yeovil • 01935 700078

NEW SWISS COTTAGE STORE
15 Northways Parade, NW3 5EN
020 7722 9560 • NOW OPEN

* THESE STORES ARE FRANCHISED AND OPERATE UNDER A LICENCE AGREEMENT TO SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION

Read the latest issue of **SEVENOAKS SELECT** digital interactive magazine today!
www.ssav.com/select



Please Note: Some brands/products are not available at all stores. Special/added value offers are not in conjunction with any other offer (NICWAOO).

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 12/12/2018. E&OE

SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION

Feedback

Got an axe to grind? Need to comment on current tech? Want to share your knowledge with our readers? **Team HCC** is here to help

TVs will defeat projectors!

Somewhat of a dumb question to a home cinema demographic, but yes, I can absolutely accommodate an 85in TV in my lounge [*Digital Copy, HCC #292*]. Now I may have to sit the wife on a beanbag, and watch it through a mirror, but on the plus side, she'll be closer to the floor to pick the popcorn up. Unless she reads this first of, course.

My first TV was a 32in CRT, and for those readers that don't know what a cathode-ray TV is, it had similar proportions to a skip, and delivered pictures akin to a candle projecting through a spinning light shade. And for those readers that don't know what a skip is... well, I digress.

I've lived my whole life with comments like 'What's with the new TV – have you gone blind?', only exasperated by the Sky+ planner on my 63in plasma (why no text resolution option on Sky+?). I pushed the boat out for the plasma, *sans* wife of course, which I'm diligently waiting to die (plasma, not wife), and hopefully before me.

I fear screen size and technology will be the death of the projector. Time has proved me right on size. I'm now waiting for full-wall TVs. I'll save on decorating with the wallpaper



mode, keep the TV in wallpaper mode for the news, and use the full-wall aspect for movies.

Sacrifices have to be made for bigscreen TVs, but if I have to get the drill out to fit a new mirror, so be it. Size really does matter. Gary

Mark Craven replies: If it's a full-wall TV you're after, Samsung (purveyor of the 85in 8K

model that kickstarted my column last month) has you covered, having shown off a 146in modular model at CES in January – named, appropriately, The Wall. If it ever comes to market I'm pretty certain it will be costlier than all but the most high-end cinema-grade projectors. You say screen size and technology will be the death of PJs – maybe they're just transforming into 'budget' options?

Solo so murky

I'm glad your review of the *Solo...* 4K Blu-ray [see *HCC #292*] mentioned the 'dark and murky' picture, and it's not just something wrong with my 4K TV... Seriously, compared to the previous new *Star Wars* movies on Blu-ray (4K in the case of *The Last Jedi*) this release is a disappointment, and makes an otherwise enjoyable movie a bit of a chore to sit through! Obviously this is how it's 'meant' to look but I don't understand why they decided to do it this way. Brian

Mark Craven replies: *Solo...* was dark and murky in cinemas too, so at least Disney's UHD BD release is faithful to the source. I suppose the creative team wanted a different feel to this retro spin-off, to give it that 'heist' film look, but hasn't really pulled it off. Some scenes (those in the Millennium Falcon) look gorgeous, though.



Solo has a deliberately dark aesthetic

Where's the 3D Blu-ray?

I was published in these pages last year, having a pretty healthy – but in my mind wholly justified – rant about the exclusion of 3D from the feature set of newly released AV equipment, namely entry-level 4K disc players and projectors [see HCC #279].

It had puzzled me as to why a manufacturer would go to the effort and expense of designing something like a superfluous, wheezy, 10W stereo sound system into a home cinema projector, whilst ignoring the third dimension. I am, however, encouraged by the appearance of some budget 4K projectors and affordable UHD disc spinners sporting 3D playback. Hoorah.

But just when I thought everything was right with the world again, now the studios and distributors have my alarm bells ringing with their failure to produce a UK/Region B 3D Blu-ray iteration of a title that has had a stereoscopic cinema release. The first that springs to mind is the *Kingsman* sequel (*Golden Circle*), which did make the rounds in cinemas in 3D but has only ever been available on a flat disc as far as I can tell.

And there are a couple of recent high-profile examples that have me *really* worried. I find that I cannot pre-order *Mission: Impossible – Fallout* nor *Venom* on 3D Blu-ray in the UK. This is in spite of the fact the latest *Mission Impossible* offering has been praised for its superior 3D ret-con. So why deny home cinema audiences the pleasure of enjoying it in *all* its glory? And *Venom*? Isn't this from the Sony/Spider-Man branch of the Marvel family tree, and wasn't Sony a flag-bearer for 3D not so long ago? I mean both of the Andrew Garfield Spideys are available on 3D Blu-ray and the same with *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, so why no *Venom* 3D disc?

This uncertainty is troubling as I really want to own these titles on physical media but can't decide whether to just pre-order the 4K versions now, or hold out and hope for belated 3D BD releases, *Force Awakens* style. Please help!

K. Britton

Anton van Beek replies: The 3D release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* always felt like a possibility, as Disney knew it had a hot property on its hands and could persuade Blu-ray buyers to double-dip for a Collector's Edition that added 3D to some new extra features. I wouldn't, however, get your hopes up for similar treatment for *Mission: Impossible – Fallout* or *Venom*.

The former flick is the first of the series to have had a 3D cinema release, so surely Paramount would have made use of that for its pre-Christmas Blu-ray debut? I can't see them returning with a 3D edition next year, particularly as the 2D version is already loaded with extra features.

★ Star Letter...

I love my second-hand setup

I have always been engaged in formerly good-quality hi-fi, followed naturally by home cinema and have in the past owned high-quality audio products from the likes of Linn/Naim/Quad etc. So I do appreciate good-quality sound delivered now in all its very many manifestations.

Over the years I embraced 5.1 leading to 7.2, but eventually the complexity of getting everything up running and optimised made me realise my hobby was actually getting in the way of what I was trying to achieve – good-quality sound and pictures. I needed something simpler and easier, something that all the family could use.

First thought then was a soundbar. I started looking at products like Sonos, which offered in many ways a complete solution albeit at a price. Yet having looked and listened to its solutions I was frankly less than impressed. I wanted more (connectivity was spot on, but there is more to life than connectivity).

So as a starting point I started buying used soundbars on eBay – Samsung, Focal, Monitor Audio, Arcam. All good in their own ways, each unit had a month or so before I decided to move it on.

Eventually I settled for the Arcam. Personal preferences will vary, of course, but it had a better complement of features and would connect to a subwoofer, which it needed. Subs, of course, are a whole different topic but mate something like the Arcam to an MJ Acoustics/REL/BK Electronics and it really does become a different animal.

So a used soundbar and sub for less than £300, which to my ears sounds great but, most importantly, works through ARC. Turn on the TV and everything just works, so my six-year-old grandson and wife can use it easily.

With the TV sound bit done, I then started thinking about how nice it would be to have my music throughout the house. So after reading many reviews I started the process again, buying and selling to achieve something satisfactory.

I purchased an Amazon Echo and Echo Dot as an interim solution. They don't

sound great but you can sync them and then play whatever you want in different parts of the house, and delivered exactly what I wanted

from radio to Amazon Music. It then occurred that they both offer a lineout. This prompted investigation into high-quality audio systems of a certain age (eg. before Bluetooth), and I was amazed at what I could buy!

Products that were £500+ when new six years ago are now yours for £50. My journey began a fresh. After a few misfires I settled on an Arcam rCube and a Libratone Beat. Both units in perfect condition and offering a terrific balance of audio quality and style. Both play in perfect harmony through the Echos and enhance the sound quality by a factor of 10.

Yes, there is a little wire involved. Yes, it's old tech. Yes, they are hugely cheap – yet sound fantastic. My message is simple: trust your ears, not what the market tells you that you need. Repurpose something that sounds great, because reality is that something that sounded amazing five years ago will still sound amazing today.

Keith

Mark Craven replies: Excellent points, Keith, and I'm glad you've arrived at a system that suits your needs and your ears.

The ability of AV hardware to last the distance is probably better than some realise. Often models are deemed unsuitable simply because a smarter alternative has come along, not because they've stopped performing. With that in mind, I'd love to hear from HCC readers with TVs, amps, speakers and projectors that are still doing a job years after purchase.

Star letter-writer Keith grabs a copy of Disney Pixar's *Incredibles 2* on Blu-ray. The long-awaited superhero sequel continues the adventures of the Parr family as they navigate the day-to-day heroics of 'normal' life and a dangerous new villain threatening their very existence. *Incredibles 2* is available on Digital Download, 3D Blu-ray™, Blu-ray™, DVD and On-Demand now.



© 2018 DISNEY

As for *Venom*, Sony Pictures hasn't (at the time of writing) confirmed any Blu-ray details, including release date. That said, UK retailers are only listing 2D iterations as 'coming soon', so you may well be right to be annoyed, especially as a look online suggests it may hit 3D BD in other European markets.

No Atmos? No sale

I have to agree with Mark Craven's comments in his *Digital Copy* article [HCC #291] regarding some companies' elitism regarding Dolby Atmos. The report in HCC #290 that B&W is ruling out Atmos upfitters for its speaker ranges came as no surprise >

to me. I contacted B&W by email over a year ago to find out if it would be selling them, and received a resounding 'no'. Other companies such as Monitor Audio were similarly disinterested at the time.

Personally, I think that B&W's loudspeaker baffle argument is just an excuse. I don't think anyone who listens to a demo of upfiring speakers seriously considers they are being short-changed in terms of audio quality. Most customers are more concerned with maintaining an acoustic and visual match for their current speaker packages, and companies such as Jamo, with its Studio series, are responding with well-designed and aesthetic products.

Atmos soundbars have demonstrated how this technology can be easily incorporated into convenience products for people without dedicated cinema rooms and in-ceiling speakers. I certainly won't be going down that route as my living room is my cinema and has typical limitations that some manufacturers don't seem to consider.

My living room is small, with a low ceiling, and I don't have an inch of space between my sofa and the wall. So, no room for rear speakers, hence my 5.1 arrangement. Three years ago, when we first moved in, I spent about six weeks cutting holes in plasterboard, fishing for cables, fitting speaker terminal wall plates, then repairing and redecorating. I won't be going through that again, and that was just to enable me to use left and right surround speakers! Installing in-ceiling speakers just isn't an option – two ceiling light roses are in the way for one thing. Also, many reviewers have commented that the Atmos effect is better with upfiring in homes like mine, due to their superior dispersion characteristics.

The Focal Sib Evo Dolby Atmos package appears to be selling strongly, so why not a B&W MT-60 Atmos version? The very design of this sub/sat package with its sloping tops lends itself to the inclusion of upfiring modules. Where is a KEF 'egg' package with Atmos incorporated? I feel the manufacturers are missing a trick here, and custom will go elsewhere.



Focal: still ruling the sub/sat Dolby Atmos roost

At least KEF has supported Atmos upfiring in the Q and R Series speaker ranges, and that is where my money has gone. I managed to pick up a pair of KEF R50s for a reasonable price now that the range has been updated. Bad news for the revenue streams of companies like B&W and Monitor Audio, who are not supporting technologies that benefit typical users in ordinary homes.
Simon

Mark Craven replies: I wrote when I auditioned the Focal Sib Evo Dolby Atmos system [HCC #276] that I was surprised I hadn't come across something like it sooner – 5.1.2 Atmos in a small(ish) consumer-friendly package. I don't know how well it's done at retail, but it hasn't been discontinued, so I'm still a bit surprised that no one has yet followed suit.

With regards to B&W, I can understand its thinking towards Atmos upfiring designed to partner its floorstander/standmounts. As Andy Kerr, B&W's Director of Product Communication, said, it has spent 'an awful lot of time' trying to get its tweeters as close to the top of a loudspeaker baffle as possible – in some cases even mounting them on top – for performance reasons. Designing an Atmos module would have B&W's engineers then wanting to reconfigure the main cabinets.

It's not the only company to swerve upfiring. Its explanation of its reasons why is appreciated.

Should I wait for Panasonic PJ?

I am a long-time reader and always look forward to the latest issue and keeping up to date with technology where resources permit. So now I've got an Oppo UDP-203 4K Blu-ray player, Apple TV 4K, high-speed active HDMI cables, Yamaha Dolby Atmos receiver (7.1.4) and a Sky system also used as a main source.

I've done all the measurements and calculations in my room and I will definitely be able to take full advantage of 4K resolution. I have a Panasonic 1080p projector at the moment and prior to this a Panasonic 720p projector. I like the beautiful pictures the Panasonic provides very much and the screen ratio memory presets are essential.

While there are a fair few Panasonic 4K televisions, I can't find a 4K Panasonic home cinema projector anywhere. Is there ever going to be one? I'm happy waiting a little while longer but if it's never going to happen then any recommendations for an alternative of the same quality are very welcome.
Jon Baines

Mark Craven replies: Don't wait for a 4K Panasonic PJ. The last home cinema model we reviewed from Panasonic was the PT-AE6000E, released back in 2013; while it does still make units for business/commercial markets, the feeling is that it has given up on consumer projection.

For an alternative, consider Epson's EH-TW range, as, like Panasonic's PT series, these use LCD technology. They're not native 4K, but the scaled images are a step up from Full HD, they support HDR playback, accept 4K content via HDMI 2.0 inputs, and offer lens memory. See p62 for our review of the EH-TW7400 ■



Panasonic used to sell LCD-based home cinema projectors

Contact us...

Write to HCC, AV Tech Media Ltd, Suite 25, Eden House, Enterprise Way, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF, or email us at letters@homecinemachoice.com
Please note: we cannot guarantee to print/answer all the letters we receive. Sorry.

INTRODUCING THE BP9000 SERIES

D.

DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY®



WHAT OBSESSION SOUNDS LIKE

We scaled remarkable, immersive, room-filling sound to new heights with our flagship tower in the BP9000 Series.

And you still get everything that's pure and indicative of the Definitive Technology home theatre experience: Forward Focused Bipolar Array, an integrated powered subwoofer and bass radiator, aluminum dome tweeters, high-performance drivers, Intelligent Bass Control™, and timeless design.

But we took it one step further, this time engineering a two-way Dolby Atmos®/ DTS:X® height module within the top of the speaker because our standards—and yours—demand it.

WWW.DEFINITIVETECHNOLOGY.COM

 **DOLBY ATMOS**®



Available now at authorised retailers:

Adams & Jarrett
St Leonards on Sea
adamsandjarrett.com

Audio Visual Online
Bacup
audiovisualonline.co.uk

Frank Harvey HiFi
Coventry
hifix.co.uk

Home Media
Maidstone
homemedialimited.co.uk

Musical Images
Edgware
musical-images.co.uk

WIN! Great Blu-rays up for grabs...

Head over to www.homecinemachoice.com/competitions to be in with a chance to win

The Time Tunnel: The Complete Series

Two scientists are catapulted from one historical event to another in this classic 1960s science-fiction TV series, which has been restored in HD from the original negatives and granted 5.1 remixes for this feature-packed Blu-ray boxset. *The Time Tunnel: The Complete Series* is out now, courtesy of Koch Media/Revelation Films, and we have three copies up for grabs!

Question:

The Time Tunnel producer Irwin Allen also created which of these sci-fi shows?

Answer:

- A) *Star Trek*
- B) *Battlestar Galactica*
- C) *Lost in Space*



The Meg

Get ready to watch Jason Statham fighting a giant prehistoric shark when *The Meg* takes a bite out of Digital Download on December 3, followed

by 4K Blu-ray™, 3D Blu-ray™, Blu-ray™ and DVD on December 10. And thanks to Warner Bros. Home Entertainment we have five Blu-rays to be won!

Question:

What does the giant prehistoric shark Megalodon's name actually mean?

Answer:

- A) Big mouth
- B) Big tooth
- C) Big shark



When a Stranger Calls

The seminal 1979 slasher makes its UK Blu-ray debut on December 17 in a deluxe limited edition set that also includes 1993 TV sequel

When a Stranger Calls Back, the CD soundtrack and much more! To celebrate the release we've joined forces with Second Sight and have three copies to give away.

Question:

When a Stranger Calls actor Charles Durning appears in which comic strip adaptation?

Answer:

- A) *Dick Tracy*
- B) *The Addams Family*
- C) *Flash Gordon*



Kin

A 14-year-old boy chances upon a mysterious and deadly otherworldly weapon in this dazzling sci-fi-action thriller with a soundtrack by Scottish band Mogwai.

Kin is out now on Digital Download, and on DVD and Blu-ray from December 26, courtesy of Lionsgate UK – and to mark the release we have five Blu-rays up for grabs!

Question:

Which of the following is the title of one of Mogwai's studio albums?

Answer:

- A) *Everybody Knows This is Nowhere*
- B) *Every Country's Sun*
- C) *Everything Changes*

To enter any of the above competitions go to www.homecinemachoice.com/competitions

Terms & Conditions

1. Entrants must be aged 18 or over and resident in the United Kingdom. 2. Employees of MyTimeMedia Ltd and companies supplying competition prizes are not eligible to enter. 3. No responsibility will be accepted for delayed, mislaid, lost or damaged entries. 4. Only one entry per household; multiple entries will be discounted. 5. Prizes will be awarded to the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing date. 6. No alternatives, cash or otherwise, will be offered to the winner as prizes. 7. The editor's decision is final. 8. Comp winners' names available on request. 9. The closing date is January 3, 2019. 10. Please note that your data will be managed in compliance with GDPR law. Our privacy law can be found at www.mytimemedia.co.uk/privacy

Thinking of a new TV... Look at the BIGGER picture

104" ULTRA HD with HDR for less than £ **4K**

WHY NOT BOOK AN APPOINTMENT AT OUR BRAND NEW DEMO SUITE?

We offer a side by side comparison of the latest home cinema technology including 4K Ultra HD projectors, projector screens, projector lifts and the latest Dolby Atmos Cinema Sound.



Authorised Dealers :

SONY

JVC

Optoma

EPSON

(S2) MONITOR AUDIO

PURE[®]
THEATRE

Call 01952 898 533 or visit puretheatre.com

St Georges Road Industrial Estate, Telford, Shropshire, TF2 7QZ

Certified: AV-Holic!

The home cinema of *HCC* reader **Peter** has evolved over the years from a modest setup to a spacious Atmos room with 4K-capable laser projection. Let's take a look around...

For cinematic impact, Peter opted for a 2.8m-wide 2.35:1-ratio projector screen



Welcome to the AV-Holics Hall of Fame! Introduce yourself...

My name is Peter, I'm a long-term reader finally happy with his home cinema room conversion so wanted to share it! I'm 40 and live in Edinburgh.

How long have you been into home cinema, and what was the first setup you had?

It was a Nicam Stereo VHS (can't recall the brand) and a Bush 'integrated sound system' with LCR speakers and subwoofer in a single unit that doubled as a TV stand, plus a pair of wired surrounds. The first movie I watched on it was *Demolition Man*. I grew up in a small town in N. Ireland and seeing proper kit was difficult, so I was obsessed with *VTV* magazine

at the time. I still have some copies in my parents' attic.

When and why did you make the decision to set up your current cinema room?

I had wanted a dedicated room as long as I can remember. When my daughter was born I couldn't really listen to the living room setup anymore, so decided to convert the garage. Half of it was already a gym, so the space was available for 'repurposing.'

Phase 1 was a bit fussy (speakers were on-walls/floorstanders, the kit rack was at the front and open), Phase 2 was neater with in-wall speakers and Dolby Atmos, plus a concealed rack, but still quite 'busy' with room details and features.



The top shelf houses 4K discs

Phase 3 (the current one) is much simpler, with less but better hardware and more seats.

So what kit's in your system?

I have a StormAudio amp/processor (the I.ISP 3D.16.12 Elite) driving a 7.1.4 Dolby Atmos system. Speakers are JBL Synthesis models across the front, plus Revel W552Ls for the surround and height channels. The subwoofer is a Paradigm SUB 1.

I have an Epson EH-LS10500 laser projector. My screen is a 2.8m-wide Screen Excellence Neo-S fixed-frame model (2.35:1). In the kit rack are a Lumagen Radiance Pro, Panasonic DMP-UB900 player, Sony PlayStation 4, Vero 4K media player, Amazon Fire 4K, Roku 4K, Amazon Echo Dot and a Logitech Harmony Elite remote.

Who was responsible for the installation? Were there any difficulties to overcome?

I built it myself, and extended the original space from 2.6m wide to 4m for Phase 3. The walls and ceiling use two layers of acoustic plasterboard (15mm and 12.5mm) with green glue between, plus Rockwool and acoustic rubber.

I had plenty of challenges as my DIY skills were originally limited, but I learned as I went and used forums for advice and inspiration. A key challenge was the

soundproofing and getting it effective. This took several attempts but when I extended last winter I got it right. Another key challenge at the time was rewiring everything from the front of the room to the back corner. It was a total nightmare at times!

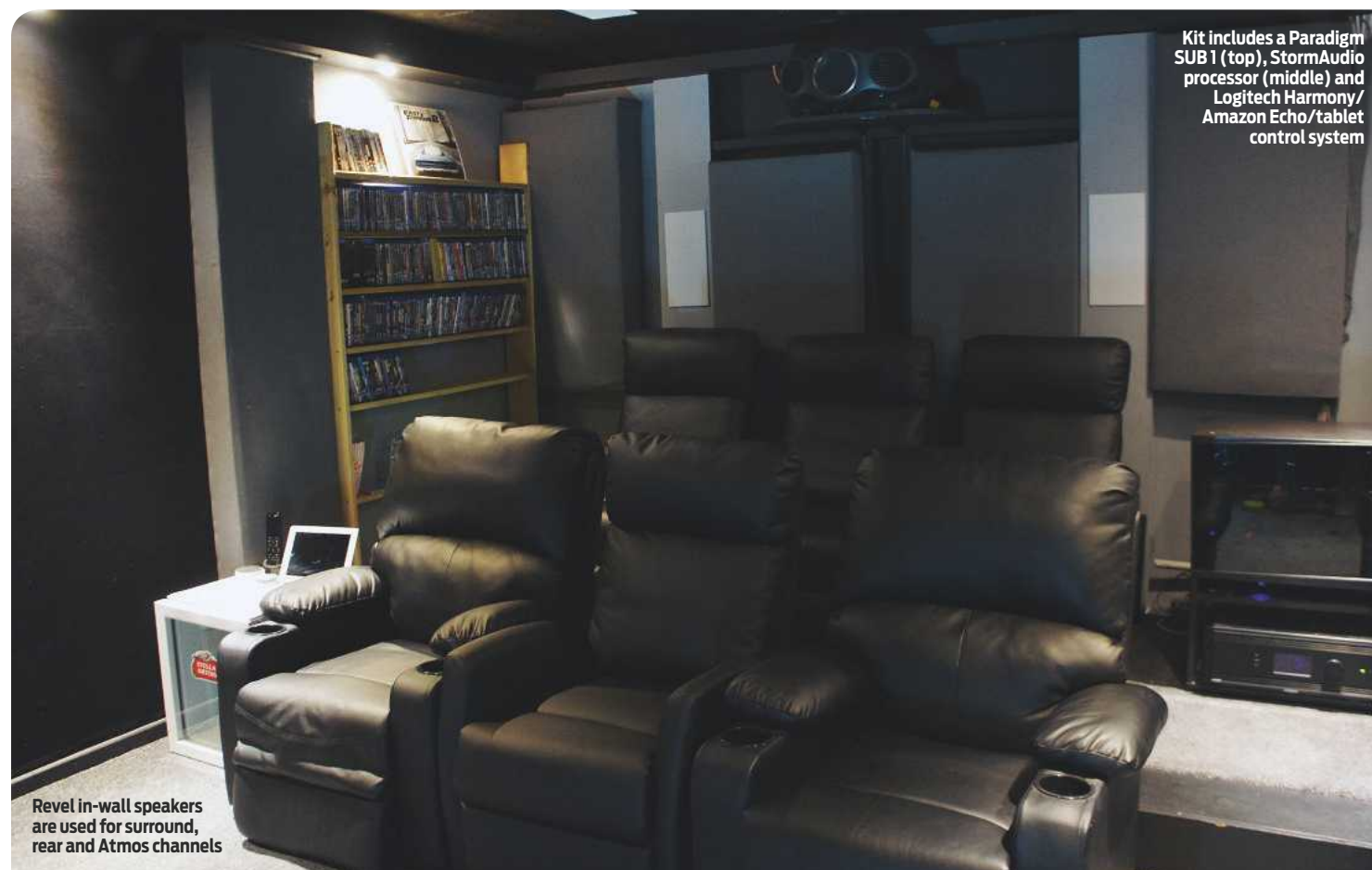
What was the last thing that you added to the setup?

The Amazon Echo Dot to control the IKEA Tradfri smart lighting and Harmony remote. It's great.

What's your verdict on the room's performance?

Brilliant. It took a long time to get what I wanted as there is a huge null right across the middle of the room, so after various room treatments, subwoofer positioning, seat positioning, more subs, different subs, moving speakers, and umpteen Dirac profiles on my old Arcam AVR550, I was mostly, but not entirely happy. Then I heard the StormAudio amp, got an extended home demo, and it just made everything brilliant – so much so I am now done! (Yeah, right!). All I do these days is turn the volume up and down.

I also have to mention the excellent service from Nick at HomeSound in Edinburgh for getting me to the brilliant performance I now have. He has helped me with all changes from Phase 2 of my cinema room onwards (several >



Kit includes a Paradigm SUB 1 (top), StormAudio processor (middle) and Logitech Harmony/Amazon Echo/tablet control system

Revel in-wall speakers are used for surround, rear and Atmos channels



Peter describes Phase 2 of his system as 'busy'

years now) and provides a genuine service focused on improving my performance. He doesn't just try to sell me stuff.

What's your favourite bit of kit and why?

Hard to choose, but probably the StormAudio amp as it makes everything else better. The Paradigm subwoofer and Epson projector are both brilliant as well, as is the Lumagen processor (even though it's 'invisible').

What do friends and family think of the cinema room?

Love it. Most people think it's going to be a big TV and a sofa, so when they see it they are very impressed.

My regular movie buddy crowned it 'PMAX' in fact, which has stuck. People are blown away by the sound most of all.

How often does the cinema room get used?

Every Monday for me and my regular movie buddy, every other weekend with the kids,

once a month for a group of local dads, and on-demand when my wife gets the girls round (they somehow take about five hours to watch a two-hour movie... Must be a hardware fault).

What discs do you use to show off the system?

Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation (car/bike chase sequence); *John Wick* (nightclub); *Hacksaw Ridge* (first assault onwards); *Oblivion* (cavern and pod escape); and randomly the thunderstorm from *Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* – it only lasts one minute but the bass and surround action is brilliant to show off my system.

And what are your top 5 favourite films?

Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation, *Aliens*, *John Wick*, *A Quiet Place*, *Edge of Tomorrow*.

Do you already have your eyes on kit upgrades?

Possibly entertaining an Apple TV 4K as it has



Converting the garage space involved plenty of DIY prep work for walls, floor and ceiling. Effective soundproofing was a challenge, says our AV-Holic



Midway through the build for 'Phase 1', with a Sanyo projector wired up. This space was expanded from 2.6m wide to 4m for the current system

no stutter and does Dolby Atmos audio for Netflix. I do also like the idea of a proper smart remote like Crestron, but it seems a bit pricey for a bit more convenience.

A PJ that does 4K 'properly' rather than upscaling would be good, but I feel that's a few years away – at my price range at least.

Do you stream movies/TV from Netflix, Amazon, Sky, etc?

Netflix mostly, and watched some of the World Cup football in 4K via the Roku streamer. I don't really watch broadcast TV or sports in that room, though.

Where did you buy the cinema seats from?

The big ones in the front row are from Amazon (£200ish) and the small ones were £100 each from B&M ■

Share your cinema system in the mag!

If you want to be in **HCC**, you'll need to send us some hi-res images of your cinema room. Here are a few tips...

1. Go big. Set your camera to take images at the largest possible size, and at the highest resolution. Don't worry about cropping or resizing – we will make them print-ready.
2. Get in focus. Make sure your photos are as sharp and clear as possible. If you have one, use a tripod, or place your camera on a flat, steady surface and take pictures on a delay. The sharper they are, the bigger we can print them.
3. Let some light in. While we tend to watch

- movies in the dark, our cinema systems look their best when they are lit. If you can shoot with natural daylight, do so. If your room doesn't get a lot of light (a garage conversion, for instance) then switch on whatever lights are fitted. Avoid using flash wherever possible.
4. Be thorough. Send photos of as much of the room as possible. Images of both the front and back of the room, the kit rack, speakers, seating, disc shelf, movie poster art... The more the merrier.

5. Don't be shy. Send a picture of yourself!
6. Show us more. Got pictures of your room before it was a cinema? Or snaps of work being done? We love to see these, too.

Now what?

Email your images to **letters@homecinemachoice.com** with the subject heading 'AV-Holic', and provide your answers to the relevant questions above – then we'll be in touch!



THE SCALE, POWER AND PRESENCE OF A
MODERN MOVIE SOUNDTRACK CANNOT BE
FULLY APPRECIATED WITH ANYTHING ELSE.



immersive

The new Bryston SP4 features an incredibly powerful DSP capable of decoding the newest Dolby, DTS, and Auro 3D formats. At up to 16 channels of discrete decoding, you can build a world class screening room at home with the new SP4.

audio

Like all Bryston electronics, the SP4 is extremely clear and neutral. But the new SP4 goes a step further and provides unprecedented control over each channel. Use Dirac Live to automatically calibrate your system to any environment, or manually fine-tune with 10 bands of EQ per channel.

at home

Controlling your home cinema has never been easier. An intuitive iPad user interface makes any command a breeze. Or, use our web-based remote control. You can also use our dedicated control modules for popular smart home systems.

TO TRULY IMMERSE YOURSELF,
CONTACT US.

PMC[®]
DISTRIBUTION UK



T +44 (0)1767 686300
www.bryston.co.uk

SERIOUSLY CINEMA SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE **BEST PICTURE** & **SOUND QUALITY** AVAILABLE AT ANY GIVEN BUDGET.

Whether you are looking for the very best sound quality to partner a new TV, a state of the art cinema or a system that will perfectly reproduce live music, our systems will outperform any alternatives.

Using only "best in class" components, our systems deliver better performance more discretely.

Call today and put us to the test.



SeriouslyCinema®

seriouslycinema.co.uk

richard@seriouslycinema.co.uk
07539 935 999 | 01727 422058



Social media search: Seriously Cinema Ltd

Authorised dealers and installers of
Steinway Lyngdorf and MK Sound products



STEINWAY LYGNDORF

PLAYBACK

→ **SOFTWARE HIGHLIGHTS** **ANT-MAN AND THE WASP** Marvel's smallest superheroes make a big impression **SICARIO 2: SOLDADO** Heading back across the border in 4K **STAR TREK: DISCOVERY** Boldly going once again in hi-def **BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES** Bringing the Darkest Knight to Blu-ray **MANDY** Nic Cage is feeling the rage & MORE!

Cruising attitude

Mission: Impossible – Fallout → Paramount
→ Ultra HD Blu-ray & All-region BD

Tom Cruise returns to the role of daredevil secret agent Ethan Hunt in the latest explosive instalment in the *Mission: Impossible* film series. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to turn to p94 and check out our review of the film's 4K release...

HCC RATINGS KEY...

Outstanding	★★★★★
Above average	★★★★☆
Acceptable	★★★☆☆
Disappointing	★★☆☆☆
Dire	★☆☆☆☆

All prices quoted are approximate and may have changed



Small in scale, big in thrills

Marvel finally cooks up the sort of soundtrack that will leave AV-hedz buzzing with delight



→ ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

Despite its relatively small (pun intended) scale versus most Marvel films, the original *Ant-Man* was a real charmer. A cute distraction from all the big, galaxy-threatening stuff.

Impressively Marvel has managed to retain the original's charm for the sequel, while simultaneously opening up its scope by a) introducing Evangeline Lilly's butt-kicking Wasp and b) cementing the characters firmly into the wider Marvel universe. There's even a half-decent plot among all the gags and imaginative visual effects.

One or two action scenes feel a touch laboured, and trimming 10 minutes would have been a good idea. Overall, though, this is another hugely slick and enjoyable entry in the Marvel canon.

Picture: The film looks lovely on 4K Blu-ray, too. Despite only receiving a 2K Digital Intermediate, for instance, it looks ultra-clean and clearly more crisp and detailed than the HD Blu-ray.

Adding to its slick look is excellent use of High Dynamic Range and wide colour. The light range is beautifully enhanced compared to the SDR Blu-ray, delivering bold light peaks with lab monitors, and sunlight reflecting off the superhero suits. There are also subtle enhancements in dark areas, bringing out more shadow detail.

Colours clearly have more volume than the SDR HD Blu-ray picture – especially during the sequences in

the Quantum Realm. Again, though, this colour expansion has been handled sensitively enough to ensure no tone looks unnatural or out of place.

It's a shame Disney has seemingly abandoned Dolby Vision, but it's hard to feel too upset about only getting HDR10 when the picture looks this good.

Audio: The 4K platter's Atmos mix suggests that Disney is getting over its past audio problems. Here you get the sort of deep bass effects that just aren't present on weirdly compressed Disney tracks like that for *Thor: Ragnarok*. Bass also has more layering. It subtly reinforces impact sounds rather than only working your subwoofer for really potent LFE moments.

Dialogue is well rounded and clean, but not excessively forward. Treble effects soar – check out the ants communicating while they're building the Quantum Gate – without rolling off into the thin harshness heard on Disney's worst, seemingly dynamic range-limited sonic efforts.

Yet more consistent use could have been made of the surround and height channels. These seem to fall into near silence on occasion, only sparking into life for the score and the aggressively full-range, all-channel Quantum Realm scenes.

Extras: Bonuses are solid, but nothing more. There's a quick-fire commentary by director Peyton Reid, four fairly unremarkable *Making of...* featurettes, a puny little gag reel, a series of outtakes, and a couple of deleted scenes. **JA**



Look for *Ant-Man and the Wasp* to return in next year's...*Infinity War* follow-up

HCC VERDICT

Ant-Man and the Wasp

→ Walt Disney → Ultra HD Blu-ray & All-region BD → £30

WE SAY: A fine transfer of a fun film. Disney's 4K platters are at last starting to do justice to its movies.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

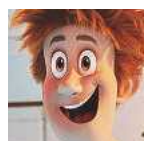
Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★



Hotel Transylvania 3

Sony Pictures → All-region BD
£25



Sending an established cast of characters on a foreign holiday is the oldest trick in the book when crafting a comedy

sequel. But, against the odds, packing Dracula and his extended family off on a monster cruise sees this cartoon franchise bounce back from an underwhelming second outing. As you might expect, the CG animation looks sensational on Blu-ray, courtesy of a sharp, colourful and detailed 1.85:1-framed Full HD encode. The accompanying DTS-HD MA 5.1 track is no slouch either – although this being a Sony title, the film's original Atmos mix is only included on the 4K release. **AvB**



The First Purge [4K]

Universal Pictures → Ultra HD Blu-ray
& All-region BD → £30



It may be a prequel that dials back the clock to the very first trial-run of the 'Purge' conceit, but this fourth instalment

in the unfathomably popular franchise is really just business as usual – albeit with even more hamfisted commentary on the current US political climate. If you do take the plunge on this latest *Purge* in 4K you can at least enjoy more balanced, less headache-inducing grading than that served up by the 1080p encode. An astonishingly powerful and active DTS:X mix is the real highlight here. The same four incredibly brief extras are repeated on the 4K and Full HD discs. **MC**



Ocean's 8 [4K]

Warner Bros. → Ultra HD Blu-ray
& All-region BD → £30



Steven Soderbergh's rat pack remake gets its own reboot with this all-female addition to the *Ocean's...* series.

The gender switch adds nothing new to the setup,

but does give talented actresses (including Sandra Bullock and Cate Blanchett) the chance to enjoy the same kind of free-wheeling caper fun that Clooney and his bros have previously monopolised. *Ocean's 8* is also an extremely good-looking film; a fact intensified by the improved contrast and more vibrant colours present in this 4K disc's HDR10/Dolby Vision grading. A front-biased Atmos soundtrack is less exciting. **MC**



Discovering a new attitude

This TV show really does go where no *Star Trek* series has gone before

→ STAR TREK: DISCOVERY – SEASON ONE

Given the sci-fi franchise's undiminished position in popular culture, it's hard to believe that prior to last year there hadn't been a new episode of a *Star Trek* TV series in 12 years. In that time, it had undergone a successful reinvention on the bigscreen. Could *Star Trek: Discovery* do the same on the smallscreen?

Produced for the CBS All Access subscription VOD service in the US, *Star Trek: Discovery* is definitely not like any *Star Trek* series that came before. Despite being promoted as a prequel to ...*The Original Series*, the new show is a much darker entity; one willing to drop F-bombs and have Starfleet contemplate planetary genocide.

At the same time, it also provides plenty of nods to the franchise's past. The Klingons are back (albeit with yet another brand-new look) and there's a sojourn to the Mirror Universe. Even so, it's easy to see why this rulebook-tearing show has proved divisive among Trekkies.

That's not to say it's not enjoyable and engrossing, although some wonky storytelling decisions and a far-too narrow focus on specific characters (after watching all 13 episodes we still have no clue who half the people on the Discovery's bridge are) means there's plenty of room for improvement when the second season blasts off next year.

Picture: *Star Trek: Discovery* boasts an appearance that matches the darker tone of its storytelling. Framed at 2.00:1, the 1080p encodes spread across this four-disc set have a gritty, textured feel to them

Sonequa Martin-Green
plays Starfleet traitor
(and series protagonist)
Michael Burnham



thanks to the fine detail inherent in the original photography and the 'digital grain' added in post production. Meanwhile, the grading often employs strong single colour tints (primarily reds, greens and blues) to add moments of vibrancy to the show's otherwise fairly muted palette.

Audio: With so much of this season finding Starfleet at war with the Klingons, it's no surprise that the DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtracks are pleasingly dynamic affairs. Bass is deep and potent, while surround effects are well positioned and move seamlessly around the soundfield. Our only complaint is that, with so much going on, would Atmos mixes really have been too much to ask for? Maybe that's one more thing they can sort out with Season Two...

Extras: In addition to deleted/extended scenes and episode promos, this Blu-ray set boasts nine substantial *Making of...* featurettes, plus a 41-minute doc exploring the season's key storylines. **AvB**



HCC VERDICT

Star Trek: Discovery – Season One

→ Paramount → All-region BD
→ £40

WE SAY: A flawed but enjoyable new twist on the familiar old *Star Trek* formula. It sounds brilliant, too.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★

Better than Bond

Strap in for a wild ride as the latest instalment in cinema's premiere action-thriller franchise explodes onto 4K Blu...



→ MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE – FALLOUT

The one thing that linked the first five *Mission: Impossible* movies, besides Tom Cruise's super spy Ethan Hunt of course, was a complete lack of links between them. Not only did each film have a different director and feel but, outside of a couple of supporting characters, there was barely any sense of continuity.

Mission: Impossible – Fallout changes all of that. Not only is the previous instalment's Christopher McQuarrie back on directing and scriptwriting duties, this latest sequel is full of references to the franchise's past. These may be a major story element, like returning villain Solomon Lane (Sean Harris), or a more casual nod, such as a spot of *M:I-2*-style free-climbing or a sting operation that harks back to a similar scene in the very first film. As Cruise himself says in one of this set's extras: 'For all the *M:I* fans [...*Fallout*] really is a culmination of every film. Every mission has led to this one.'

It's ironic then that it is precisely those ties to the past that prevent *...Fallout* from quite measuring up to the brilliance of Cruise and McQuarrie's previous franchise team-up *...Rogue Nation*. While that 2015 film felt like its own self-contained thing, this entry is very much part of a series and feels the weight of franchise baggage accordingly.

Still, if *...Fallout* does slip short of *...Rogue Nation*, it's not for want of trying. Despite a hefty 147-minute running time, it never once lags. Instead, it's relentless in its dynamism, piling incident on top of incident, twist on top of twist, with a breakneck pace that will leave you gasping for breath. And at the centre of it all is Tom Cruise, once again putting his life on the line and performing some of the most audacious stunts and action set-pieces ever brought to the silver screen.

It all adds up to yet another soaring triumph for Cruise and his flagship franchise. *Mission: Impossible – Fallout* is pure action-movie bliss, a non-stop thrill-ride that towers above every other blockbuster released this year. All that remains to be seen is how Cruise and co. plan to top it next time.

Picture: The picture on *...Fallout*'s Ultra HD Blu-ray is a curiously mixed bag. On the one hand, the two sections of the film that have been mastered from IMAX sources and appear in their 1.90:1 ratio (the HALO jump and helicopter chase) look stunning. These are packed with noise-free detail, gorgeously rich but also naturally coloured, and explosively HDR. Seriously stellar.

However, the non-IMAX stuff that occupies most of the running time looks frankly disappointing at times. Black levels can be shallow, colours often

look oddly flat, skin tones sometimes appear rather awkward, and HDR feels muted throughout. Detailing is also a little disappointing – especially considering the film was granted a 4K DI.

Given the love and attention lavished on so many aspects of this release, it's hard to believe that the 2.39:1-ratio sequences don't appear pretty much as Christopher McQuarrie wanted them to, presumably in a bid to create a relatively down-beat tone. But if this creation of a 'mood' is indeed behind the frequently rather dour 4K BD pictures, maybe it wasn't such a good idea to include such spectacular-looking IMAX sequences?

Paramount has provided a Dolby Vision transfer alongside the usual HDR10 one, and this does improve things. Colours look a little more balanced and refined, and there's slightly more dynamism. But even DV can't hide the sensation that this just isn't quite the 4K Blu-ray ace we'd hoped for.

Audio: Whatever concerns we may have regarding *...Fallout*'s 4K visual prowess, there are no such reservations when it comes to the audio side of the AV equation.

The film's Dolby Atmos soundtrack (also employed on the Full HD platter) unleashes a cavalcade of surround effects – particularly with the many action set-pieces. Not only are they perfectly placed and pan with wicked accuracy, they pack a real punch (as does the absolutely monstrous LFE that underpins it all). Check out the toilet fight (Chapter 4), which abandons music and dialogue completely in favour of punishing Foley effects, for a taste of just how powerful and precise the mix can be.

The height layer is also used extremely effectively, whether it's something as simple as having a train rattle past off-screen on an overhead track (Chapter 7) or as dynamic as placing you inside a crashed helicopter, rolling down a mountainside (Chapter 14).

Extras: Both the 4K and Full HD movie discs share the same extras – a commentary from McQuarrie and Cruise, a second commentary with McQuarrie and editor Eddie Hamilton, a third commentary with composer Lorne Balfe, and an isolated score. Sadly, the last of these is presented as Dolby Digital 5.1, rather than in its lossless form.

A second BD houses more goodies. Here you'll find the seven-part *Behind-the Fallout* doc, which looks at the making of the film's biggest stunts (including one that was cut from the finished film); a montage of deleted scenes; a score breakdown for the London foot chase; four sets of storyboards; and the trailer. **AvB & JA**

Production was halted for eight weeks when Cruise broke his ankle shooting a rooftop chase (below)



Vanessa Kirby plays the arms-dealing daughter of Vanessa Redgrave's character from the first flick



The IMAX-lensed helicopter chase is the disc's standout 4K showcase

HCC VERDICT

Mission: Impossible – Fallout

→ Paramount → Ultra HD Blu-ray & All-region BD → £35

WE SAY: The year's best blockbuster – we only wished it looked as good as it sounds on 4K Blu-ray.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★

Arcade Action

Bigscreen home entertainment isn't just about movies anymore. **Rik Henderson** checks out a videogame vying for time on your home cinema system...



Red Dead Redemption II

Rockstar Games → PS4, Xbox One → £60

When Rockstar announces a game it's generally a big deal, so the anticipation and hype ends up going through the roof – and this is the case with *Red Dead Redemption II*. Thankfully, it fulfils the promise and proves to be well worth the wait.

A prequel to the previous outing, the game follows Arthur Morgan, a gang mate of the first *Red Dead*... 's John Marston and essentially tells the tale leading up to the events of that game. Morgan himself is an excellent main foil – gruff and Eastwood-like in his mannerisms, brutal and unrelenting in his actions. This is no game for children or those looking for the lighter side of Rockstar's writing. It's an experience that ultimately leads to the redemption in the title, but builds up the nastier reasons for it along the way.

It is also a slow, measured game, rather than a fast-paced action shooter, in part due to the open-world map on which you play. This is mammoth and even getting from one location to another takes considerable time.

You can fast-travel at points, or set your horse on an automatic path – but doing so means you may miss out on the random encounters and other elements that make *Red Dead Redemption II* so deep and enjoyable.

In true Rockstar fashion, it's as much a Wild West simulator as an adventure game. From hunting and playing poker, to mixing recipes and growing a beard, there is so much to do that you could easily

spend weeks ignoring the storyline entirely.

The attention to detail is exceptional, hence a five-star score. The only caveat is that, while the graphical presentation is superb (especially in native 4K on Xbox One X) HDR performance is underwhelming. The brightness in HDR mode can be ramped up to aid contrast, but colours remain muted and there's no sign of a wider gamut on display.

Nonetheless, *Red Dead Redemption II* is the best game of the year, possibly of this console generation. All we need now is a PC version. And better HDR please, Mr Rockstar.



Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again

Universal Pictures → All-region BD
£25



While there is nothing quite as egregious as Pierce Brosnan's fog-horn bellowing this time around, this second helping of ABBA karaoke remains a frequently tone-deaf piece

of musical cinema that seems to reject the entire notion of plot and drama. On a more positive note, the film's sun-drenched locations (captured using Arri Alexa cameras) result in a bright and colourful 2.40:1 Full HD encode, while the Atmos audio is pretty lively – although use of the height channels is sparse. Bonus features are light, frothy and plentiful. **AvB**



The Expanse: Season Two

Dazzler Media → Region B BD
£25



This critically-acclaimed sci-fi series gets even more expansive in its sophomore season, as the crew of the Roci set out to destroy every last trace of the deadly 'Protomolecule', while

Earth and Mars appear inexorably drawn towards all-out war. Just as this run of 13 episodes improves on the (already excellent) previous season, so too does this Blu-ray release top its predecessor. In addition to detailed 1.78:1-framed 1080p encodes and thrilling DTS-HD MA 5.1 mixes that bristle with surround effects, the four-disc set serves up far more extras, including commentaries on seven episodes. **AvB**



Doctor Who: Twice Upon a Time [4K]

BBC Worldwide → Ultra HD Blu-ray
& All-region BD → £20



Not content with giving classic 1970s serials HD makeovers, the BBC has now given Peter Capaldi's swansong as the Twelfth Doctor a 4K upscale. Outside of some close-ups,

this 2160p version of the hour-long Xmas special doesn't offer much in the way of enhanced detailing, but HDR grading brings improved highlights and richer colours. The footage from 1966's *The Tenth Planet* that kicks things off looks even rougher than ever, though. A *Making of...*, a look back at Capaldi's time on the show, and an hour-long Comic Con panel are included. **MC**



'Does anybody want to explain why I can't pick up *Loye Island* on any of these TVs?'



4K
ULTRA
HD

Cranking up the body count

Brutalist action-thriller sequel confirms the US/Mexican border is no place for japes

→ SICARIO 2: SOLDADO

While it shares the same screenwriter, *Sicario 2: Soldado* is a rather different movie to its acclaimed predecessor. Invited to retool his revenge yarn into a trilogy, Taylor Sheridan has constructed a fast-paced thriller that winds tighter than a tourniquet.

Conflating the 'war on terror' with the 'war on drugs', director Stefano Sollima uncorks a torrent of furious aggression. The film moves at a breakneck pace. Everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere, be they in choppers or heavily armoured Humvees.

Josh Brolin returns as the nihilistic CIA agent with a flare for casual footwear, once again partnered with Benicio Del Toro, the co-opted hitman only too keen to settle scores with the cartel that robbed him of his family.

Picture: The Ultra HD Blu-ray image, framed at 2.39:1, is heavily stylised. Shooting with Alexa XT and Alexa Mini cameras, cinematographer Dariusz (*The Martian*) Wolski creates a sombre yet gritty and almost tactile aesthetic.

Exteriors are overcast, colours muted. Despite being shot largely in the desert, there are often no obvious shadows; several key scenes happen at dusk. When we do encounter a brightly lit exterior it's almost uncomfortable, but not solely because of the HDR10 presentation. Peak highlights are mainly used within Brolin's command and

control bunker, and delivered via car headlights and searchlights. It's here that you'll see the biggest dynamic difference between the regular Blu-ray disc and the UHD platter, the 4K outing benefiting from this greater intensity.

Audio: The sound design here is relentlessly dramatic. Both the 1080p Blu-ray and UHD disc offer the same Dolby Atmos mix, characterised by Hildur Guðnadóttir's mesmeric industrial score. The height component is chiefly used to channel the pulsing soundtrack, rather than steer Foley effects.

A collaborator of the late Jóhann Jóhannsson, who scored the original *Sicario*, ex-Throbbing Gristle band member Guðnadóttir creates a disturbing atmosphere that perfectly fits a reprise of Jóhannsson's honking string glissando.

The mix itself is wantonly dynamic, Chapter 6's convoy attack sequence a standout example of the movie's ferocious sonic power. When the heavy-calibre guns let rip, your sub will pump in excitement.

Extras: The 4K and Full HD discs both contain the same trio of puff-piece shorts.

From Film to Franchise..., looks at the change in direction and style between the two movies, while *An Act of War...* throws the spotlight on the production itself. Finally, *The Assassin and the Soldier* digs deeper into the relationship between Brolin and Del Toro's characters. **SM**



Producer Trent Luckinbill claims a third *Sicario* film is 'in development'



HCC VERDICT

Sicario 2: Soldado

→ Lionsgate → Ultra HD Blu-ray & Region B BD → £35

WE SAY: This superior sequel pumps up the action and delivers the AV goods. A brutal thrill ride.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★





No-holds-barred Cage fighting

Things are going to get pretty crazy in this psychedelic horror throwback

→ MANDY

In recent years Nicolas Cage has become something of a joke in certain circles of film fandom, his all-or-nothing performances finding him relegated to the star of countless internet memes. But finally, after a glut of terrible direct-to-DVD duffers, Cage has found the perfect home for his flamboyantly intense acting style in writer-director Panos Cosmatos's demented revenge thriller *Mandy*.

Set in 1983, the film casts Cage as Red Miller, a logger living with his artist girlfriend Mandy (Andrea Riseborough) in a backwoods cabin. When Mandy is killed by the members of a cult led by the charismatic Jeremiah Sand (Linus Roache), the grief-stricken Red downs a bottle of vodka, picks up his crossbow, forges a battle axe and heads out to get revenge.

Looked at purely as a story, *Mandy* would appear to be nothing more than just another blood-soaked grindhouse revenge thriller. However, taking his inspiration from '80s horror video covers and heavy metal album sleeves, Cosmatos has crafted something altogether more gonzo.

Simultaneously melancholy and mind-bending, filled with phantasmagorical landscapes, demonic bikers, chainsaw fights and theological debates, *Mandy* is a cinematic breath of fresh air. Against all of that, watching Cage cut loose and go postal feels entirely natural and the only genuinely human response imaginable. Finally he has a movie just as bonkers as he is, and it's a joy to behold.

Picture: *Mandy* may have been shot digitally using Arri Alexa cameras, but Cosmatos has gone out of his way to ensure that his movie has the look of



something shot on film. Every single frame of the AVC 2.40:1 Full HD encode positively swarms with digital grain that can obscure fine detail at times. Colours are bright and vibrant, frequently washing over entire scenes with a single garish primary (quite frequently, red), and are backed up by impenetrably inky black levels.

Audio: The film arrives on Blu-ray with an involving DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix that proves adept at creating a spacious and dynamic soundfield, while reproducing Jóhann Jóhannsson's score. The latter aspect is the real highlight here, an unsettling but evocative mix of throbbing '80s synth beats and wailing riffs – the latter provided by doom metal guitarist Stephen O'Malley.

Extras: A reel of five deleted scenes and a *Making of...* featurette are the only extras. Thankfully, the latter is one of the better examples of its ilk, packing plenty of info into its 22-minute running time. **AvB**



'I like Panos because he's a weirdo,' says Andrea Riseborough of *Mandy*'s director Panos Cosmatos

HCC VERDICT

Mandy

→ Universal Pictures → All-region BD
→ £15 (HMV exclusive)

WE SAY: A brilliantly bonkers assault on the senses. A few more extras wouldn't have gone amiss though...

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

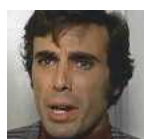
Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★

The Case of the Bloody Iris

Shameless → Region B BD
£17



A masked killer stalks an apartment building that is the home to a bevy of beautiful ladies in this entertaining and unpretentious 1972 giallo thriller starring genre icons Edwige Fenech and George Hilton. Shameless claims its Blu-ray is based on a new 2K restoration, and while that may well be the case, the AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode is riddled with scanner noise, resulting in an unnaturally digital look. Italian and English LPCM 2.0 tracks are offered, and both sound perfectly fine. New interviews with actors George Hilton and Paola Quattrini are included. **AvB**



Leave No Trace

Sony Pictures → R2 DVD
£12



Winter's Bone helmer Debra Granik delivers another restrained, yet incredibly powerful piece of backwoods

family drama with this rewarding tale of a father and daughter as they move through various homes and shelters, trying to live off-grid. As frustrating as it is to see *Leave No Trace* denied a Blu-ray release on these shores, the problem is compounded by an anamorphic 1.85:1 DVD transfer that sometimes struggles with densely detailed woodland location footage and breaks down into a mass of pixelisation and aliasing. There are no extras, either, not even a trailer. **AvB**



Tag

Warner Bros. → R2 DVD
£12



Taking its inspiration from the true story of a group of friends who have been playing the same game of tag every

May since 1983, *Tag* is a rather lacklustre comedy that starts off with plenty of pep, but quickly runs out of steam. The clips shown under the end credits of the real people who inspired the film are far funnier than anything in the movie itself, so maybe a documentary about them would have been much more satisfying. A flop at cinemas, *Tag* bypasses Blu but lands a fairly good-looking DVD transfer, with a five-minute featurette about the real-life players as the sole extra. **MC**



An Evening with Beverly Luff Linn

Picturehouse Entertainment
Region B BD → £20



Nowhere near as grotesque as his 2016 debut *The Greasy Strangler*, director Jim Hosking's latest film will prove just as polarising with its self-consciously offbeat and wacky take on the rom-com. A clear believer in delayed gratification, Hosking lets the film ramble on and on – but when it all comes together it does so in an unexpectedly delightful manner. While this Blu-ray is devoid of extras beyond a trailer and the DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix is limited in its ambitions, the 1.85:1 Full HD encode is pleasingly warm and detailed. **AvB**



DENON®

AVC-X6500H

MADE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST CINEMA... YOURS.

WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2018

Home cinema amplifiers
Best home cinema amplifier over £1500
Denon AVC-X6500H



BLOCKBUSTING 3D-SOUND

This powerhouse 11.2 channel AV Surround Amplifier offers the most advanced 3D audio suite including Dolby Atmos, DTS:X, Auro-3D and IMAX Enhanced. It also boasts unparalleled music playback options thanks to our built-in HEOS technology, as well as support for Apple AirPlay 2, Google Assistant, and Amazon Alexa voice compatibility for seamless control.

Visit www.denon.co.uk for more information.



Mark Hamill found a galaxy of new fans voicing the Joker in the show



Bat's entertainment, folks

DISC
OF THE
MONTH

Over 42 hours of animated superheroics? Looks like we've a long, dark night ahead of us...

→ **BATMAN: THE COMPLETE ANIMATED SERIES**

The 1980s was not a great decade for TV animation. Seen strictly as something for children, cartoons of the time were essentially giant toy adverts done on the cheap. This started to change as the decade came to a close, with the debut of *The Simpsons* and the Spielberg-produced *Tiny Toons Adventures*. The success of these shows proved you could make 'toons that both kids and grown-ups could enjoy.

It was in this cauldron of newfound creativity that artists Bruce Timm and Eric Radomski began work developing a new *Batman* cartoon for the nascent Fox Kids. While the initial decision may have been driven by the success of Tim Burton's live-action 1989 blockbuster, when the cartoon debuted in 1992 it was clear that *Batman: The Animated Series* was no mere cash-in. Here was a 'toon that veered away from the simple superheroics of *Super Friends*, presenting its viewers with morally ambiguous stories, while digging into the psychology of its characters in ways nobody could have expected.

It also looked like nothing else on TV. Inspired by the Fleischer Studios *Superman* cartoons of the '40s, *Batman: The Animated Series* paired its simplified character designs with what was dubbed a 'Dark Deco' aesthetic (backdrops were painted on black paper as opposed to the traditional white), which gave the series a strong film noir vibe.

While the show underwent a couple of updates over the years (most notably a modification of its



HCC VERDICT

Batman: The Complete Animated Series

→ Warner Bros. → All-region BD
→ £60

WE SAY: A beautifully presented Blu-ray boxset for one of the best cartoon series ever made.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★

visual style for the final season, under the *New Adventures of Batman* re-brand) for many it remains the definitive screen version of the Dark Knight, trumping even the Christopher Nolan films with its complex narratives and poignant characters.

Picture: Produced almost entirely by hand and 'shot' on film, all 109 episodes of *Batman: The Animated Series* have been meticulously restored for this set.

The dust and debris that plagued earlier DVD transfers has been mostly eliminated and the extra clarity allows you to really see every brush stroke in the 1.37:1 frame. While there are a number of shots throughout the episodes that look noticeably softer, they clearly stem from the original recordings, rather than being something introduced by the restoration process or encoding.

Audio: The episodes feature DTS-HD MA 2.0 audio, but thanks to the fully-orchestrated scores the tracks sound richer and more involving than you may expect. There's also clear channel separation, especially during action beats, and good use of atmospheric effects in the mixes, – all giving the impression of a reasonably wide soundscape.

Extras: All the extras from the four volumes of DVDs have been ported over. These include intros and chat-tracks for selected episodes, the original pilot promo, and character featurettes.

This 12-disc set also adds a wonderful new 98-minute documentary about the making of the series, plus the two spin-off films *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* and *Batman & Mr Freeze: SubZero* – which look just as good as the show in HD. **AvB**

Invention for Destruction

Second Run → All-region BD
£20



Inspired by the writings of Jules Verne, Karel Zeman's dazzling 1958 film remains the most commercially successful

Czech film ever made. Where his later *The Fabulous Baron Munchausen* (1962) looks back to early cinema, *Invention from Destruction* takes its design cues from book illustrations. The stunning 4K restoration that serves as the basis for this Blu-ray's 1.37:1 1080p encode hammers this home through its crisply rendered hatching lines and monochrome palette. Excellent extras include the alternate English version and two short films. **AvB**



Daisies

Second Run → All-region BD
£20



Who would have thought that Czech director Vera Chytilová's 1966 surrealist classic would be available on

Blu-ray long before the likes of *Panic Room* and *True Lies*? As odd as this may seem, we aren't complaining. After all *Daisies* (aka *Sedmikrásky*) is a wild and anarchic piece of filmmaking that deserves to find a wider audience. Second Run's Blu-ray is a treat too, pairing a pleasing (if not quite pristine) new HD remaster with some top-notch bonus features, including two informative audio commentaries and a 2004 documentary about Chytilová. **AvB**



Distant Voices, Still Lives

BFI → Region B BD
£20



Terrence Davies' haunting and lyrical portrait of a working class family in post-war

Liverpool celebrates its 30th anniversary with a truly stunning Blu-ray release. The main draw here is a new 4K restoration that perfectly captures the grainy, almost sepia-tinted look of the source material. While not especially dynamic, the LPCM 2.0 audio does wonders with the songs that crop up through the film. Extras include a commentary, interview and Q&A (all featuring Davies), plus three archival short films concerning Liverpool. **AvB**



Operation Red Sea

Cine Asia → Region B BD
£20



While the promotional material may claim that Dante Lam's latest blockbuster was inspired by real events,

the real inspiration would appear to be the films of Michael Bay and Peter Berg. This is two-and-a-quarter hours of non-stop action, explosions and patriotic jingoism – which manages to be both breathtakingly exciting and just as draining as you'd expect. While this UK Blu-ray makes a fairly decent impression, for some reason Cine Asia has opted for a 1080i50 encode with DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio, rather than the native 1080p with DTS:X available elsewhere. **AvB**



These two projects deserve an A+

Jackie Chan risks life and limb for our pleasure in these classic Hong Kong action-comedies

→ JACKIE CHAN'S PROJECT A & PROJECT A PART II

Jackie Chan was a known name in martial arts cinema since the tail-end of the 1970s, but it was the release of *Project A* in 1983 that saw Chan become a true action superstar and started him down the road to international fame.

A knockabout period action-comedy, *Project A* stars Chan as a member of the Hong Kong Marine Police, who has as much trouble with the land-based cops as he does with the pirates who have been raiding ships nearby.

While the film isn't short on scraps (what would else you expect with Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao also along for the ride?), the focus shifts away from traditional martial arts styles. *Project A* also marks the beginning of Chan's love of big set-piece stunts. The most notable here is a homage to Harold Lloyd's clock tower stunt from 1923's *Safety Last!* – although Chan lets go and falls 60 feet, crashing through several awnings, before hitting the ground head-first.

Rather that attempt to surpass the benchmark set by the original, *Project A Part II* (1987) takes a slightly different tack, playing up the politics and the comedy. Even so, there are still some terrific stunts and fight scenes for action fans to devour – although we wish Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao hadn't been busy elsewhere shooting *Eastern Condors* and could have returned.

Picture: The two films have very distinct aesthetics, both of which are accurately represented by the new 2K restorations that serve as the basis for this



Let's get ready to rumble...



release. The first film is altogether brighter and boasts a fine grain field, while the sequel uses more diffuse interior lighting and showcases a grainier texture. In both cases, the 2.35:1 encodes look excellent and, thankfully, don't suffer from the colour-grading issues that affected the restorations used in Eureka's *Police Story* set.

Audio: The films offer a choice of the original Cantonese and English dub tracks in mono and remixed 5.1 incarnations. While the mono tracks sound thin compared to the 5.1 versions, the latter are saddled with unconvincing surround placement of Foley effects that will soon have you rushing back to the original mixes.

Extras: Each film boasts a new appreciation by Asian cinema expert Tony Rayns, plus various archival interviews, promo pieces, and its own collectible booklet. An upscale of the alternate 'Export Cut' of *Project A Part II* is also included. **AvB**



HCC VERDICT

Jackie Chan's Project A & Project A Part II

→ Eureka! → Region B BD
→ £30

WE SAY: A double-header of Asian action classics that now look far better than ever.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★



A dame to kill for?



Witness the terrifying power of 'Illusion-O'!

Indicator is king of this Castle

Feature-packed boxset celebrates four of the boundary-pushing filmmaker's finest flicks

→ WILLIAM CASTLE AT COLUMBIA: VOLUME ONE

Best known as the film that saw cinema seats being hooked up with electric buzzers, *The Tingler* (1959) stars Vincent Price as a scientist investigating the effects of fear. In the course of his research he discovers that the tingle we feel run up our spines when afraid is caused by a strange creature that can only be destroyed by our screams. Add to that a murderous husband looking to kill his mute wife for her money, and you have the ingredients for an enjoyably insane creature-feature.

Compared to *The Tingler*, the plot of the following year's *13 Ghosts* (1960) feels almost ordinary. Yet another tale of greed (a theme that runs through all four films in the set), it sees a cash-strapped family inheriting a haunted house from an eccentric relative – unaware that the dead man's attorney is on the hunt for a hidden treasure. The gimmick this time out was an 'Illusion-O' ghost viewer that let audience members see the spooks, or make them disappear from the film if they got too scared.

Castle's answer to *Psycho*, 1961's *Homicidal* is a nifty horror-thriller about a murderous femme fatale with a shocking secret. It also boasts a 'Fright Break' just before the finale, allowing those with the jitters to flee before it all gets too much.

Finally, we have *Mr. Sardonicus* (1961), a sadistic Gothic chiller about a gifted surgeon coerced into assisting a disfigured nobleman who hides his face behind a featureless mask. The film was promoted



with a 'Punishment Poll' that would supposedly let audiences determine Sardonicus's fate – although, in truth, only one ending was ever shot.

Picture: All four films are based on HD remasters supplied by Sony Pictures, and in each case the 1.85:1-framed black-and-white 1080p encodes exhibit excellent stability, contrast, detailing and greyscale.

The Tingler's 'blood bath' sequence, with its *Schindler's List*-style splash of red (Chapter 6), looks more vibrant than ever, having received a fresh 4K scan from a 35mm print held by the BFI.

13 Ghosts also serves up two well-rendered (if, understandably, slightly less well-defined) recreations of its 'Illusion-O' sequences. The first has both the red and blue images baked-in – and works perfectly well with a pair of anaglyph 3D specs. The second allows you to switch between the red and blue visuals using the angle button on your remote. **Audio:** The set's mono soundtracks (three LPCM, the other DTS-HD MA) have also undergone a cleanup. While they don't offer too much to get excited about, they are as true to the sources as you could hope for.

Extras: One day Indicator will release a boxset that doesn't dazzle us with its array of bonus features – rest assured this is not that set. Digging through the disc menus unearths a wealth of commentaries, critical appreciations, isolated music and effects tracks, interviews, trailers and galleries. Each disc is also accompanied by a superb booklet packed with essays and archival goodies. **Avb**



Producer-director William Castle was a master when it came to promoting both his films and himself...

HCC VERDICT

William Castle at Columbia: Volume One

→ Indicator → All-region BD
→ £43

WE SAY: A feast of fun for fans of William Castle's gimmick-laden films. Roll on Volume Two...

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★

CELEBRATING THE YEAR'S BEST PRODUCTS



GLOBAL AWARDS 2018-19

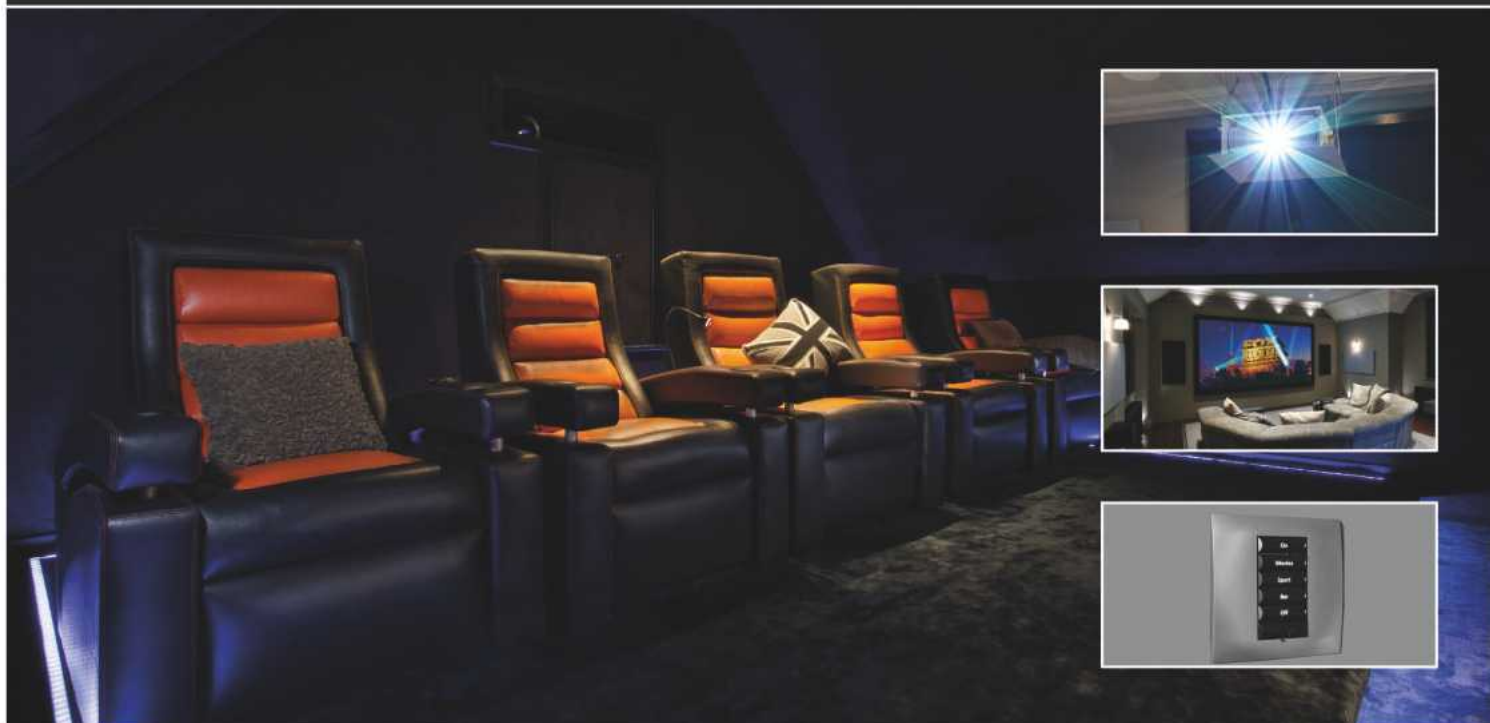
visit www.eisa.eu for the winners

EISA is the unique collaboration of 55 member magazines and websites from 27 countries, specialising in all aspects of consumer electronics from mobile devices, home theatre display and audio products, photography, hi-fi and in-car entertainment. Now truly international with members in Australia, India, Canada, the Far East and USA, and still growing, the EISA Awards and official logo are your guide to the best in global consumer technology!



An uncompromising approach to Home Cinema

Home Cinema ■ Home Automation ■ Music ■ Lighting ■ HVAC ■ Custom Design & Installations



PROGRESSIVE
HOME TECHNOLOGY

www.progressive-ht.com
01892 860801

CEDIA
MEMBER

Home Cinemas • Home Automation & Control • TV, Audio & WiFi Distribution • Lighting
Full Design & Installation



KENT home
cinema

www.KentHomeCinema.co.uk
01892 535007

CEDIA CUSTOM
ELECTRONIC
DESIGN &
INSTALLATION
ASSOCIATION

Carry on camping? Not after this...

The only thing this couple hate more than each other is nature. Turns out the feeling is mutual

→ LONG WEEKEND

A married couple whose relationship is falling apart hope to save things with a weekend spent camping by a secluded beach. It isn't long before their toxic relationship with one another spills over into their treatment of the environment itself, and before long Mother Nature decides it's time to take her revenge...

Written by the late 'Ozploitation' legend Everett De Roche, *Long Weekend* (1978) isn't as well known as the likes of *Patrick*, *Road Games* and *Razorback*, but for our money it's his best work by some distance. Plaudits must also go to actors Briony Behets and John Hargreaves, who do an excellent job of bringing their essentially unlikeable characters to life.

Meanwhile, director Colin Eggleston keeps things moody and mysterious, eschewing gore and cheap shocks in favour of more unsettling scares – not least the dead dugong that seems to slowly creep closer and closer to the couple's camp, like some inescapable supernatural horror ripped straight from the pages of an M.R. James ghost story.

Picture: Second Sight's AVC-encoded 2.35:1 Full HD presentation of *Long Weekend* is pretty impressive. Fine textures are well-resolved, colours look nice and bright, black levels are solid and a fine layer of native grain gives the entire image a film-like appearance.

That said, there's some speckling that becomes particularly apparent during night scenes (check out the kangaroo roadkill scene in Chapter 2), and there are also issues with grain density fluctuations on occasion.



Not quite glamping...

Audio: The disc includes the original mono soundtrack (LPCM) and a 5.1 remix (DTS-HD Master Audio). The latter is actually quite

effective, placing animal cries and other wildlife sounds in the surrounds. Score and dialogue are nicely balanced in both mixes.

Extras: Best of the bunch is *Nature Found Them Guilty...*, which features critics Sally Christie, Lee Gambin, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas and Emma Westwood analysing the film and its themes.

Also included on the Blu-ray are an archival audio commentary by executive producer Richard Brennan and cinematographer Vincent Monton; a 1995 audio interview with the late John Hargreaves that plays over a gallery of behind-the-scenes stills (including a couple of shots of the alternate version of the finale mentioned in the chat-track); and interviews with Behets, De Roche and Monton shot for the 2008 *Not Quite Hollywood* documentary. **AvB**



HCC VERDICT

Long Weekend

→ Second Sight → Region BD
→ £20

WE SAY: An impressive Blu-ray outing for this classic of the eco-horror genre.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

Extras: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★

Rats: Night of Terror

88 Films → Region B BD
£15



Best remembered for its utterly bonkers final twist, director Bruno Mattei's 1984 shocker finds the survivors of a

nuclear holocaust stumbling across an abandoned outpost full of food, clean water... and hundreds of deadly killer rats! This delightfully silly frightener scurries onto Blu-ray with a somewhat soft and grainy, but pleasingly organic-looking, 1.85:1 Full HD encode. Meanwhile, the Italian soundtrack is joined by a hilariously awful English dub (both LPCM stereo), which almost makes the film more entertaining. Extras include a couple of interviews and a fold-out poster. **AvB**



The Monster

Icon Home Entertainment
R2 DVD → £10



Creature feature meets domestic drama in this excellent low-budget flick from writer-director Bryan (The Strangers)

Betino. This surprisingly effective film sees an alcoholic mother (Zoe Kazan) and her 10-year-old daughter (Ella Ballentine) stranded on a remote stretch of woodland road at night when their car breaks down, only to be stalked by a deadly creature with a taste for human flesh. While the lack of a UK Blu-ray is disappointing, the fact the film is shrouded in darkness helps cover up any sins in the anamorphic 2.40:1 transfer. The lack of any extras beyond a trailer is frustrating. **AvB**



Ash vs Evil Dead: The Complete Third Season

Twentieth Century Fox
All-region BD → £25



With Bruce Campbell having announced that he is hanging up the chainsaw, this third and final season is our last chance to spend time with Ash Williams. Thankfully, these 10

half-hour episodes send the *Evil Dead* franchise off on a high, delivering all the gore, gags and general outrageousness that fans love, while also containing plenty of surprises. As with the previous two seasons, this Blu-ray release splits its episodes across two discs, serving up colourful (if occasionally noisy) 1.78:1 Full HD visuals and thrillingly dynamic Dolby TrueHD 7.1 sonics. Commentaries are provided for each episode. **AvB**



'I see earthquakes and lightnin...'

The teenage witch returns to Netflix in a show that trades gags for ghouls

→ CHILLING ADVENTURES OF SABRINA: SEASON ONE

A surprisingly dark offshoot from the Archie comic universe, *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* offers plenty to enjoy if you're a horror fan. The tale of a half-witch who rails against signing away her soul to the Devil on her 16th birthday, the show peppers each episode with genre references and Easter eggs. Look hard and you'll see some *Suspiria* here and *Hellraiser* there, not to mention quite a lot of art from Clive Barker.

The production design is unapologetically Gothic. Sabrina Spellman (Kiernan Shipka, aka *Mad Men*'s Sally Draper) lives with her two aunts, Hilda and Zelda, and embalming cousin Ambrose, in a funeral home that seems a cross between 1313 Mockingbird Lane and the Psycho house. There's a mortuary in the basement and an imposing double staircase that could easily have been relocated from Hill House.

Anyone expecting a sitcom in the style of the old Melissa Joan Hart version will be in for a big shock; this new Netflix show plays its grimoire straight. Indeed, the nearest it gets to levity is with the choice of music: *Bad Moon Rising*, *Devil Woman*, *Strange Magic*... you get the drift.

Of course, with its teenage hero and supernatural mythology, it's easy to draw similarities with Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but *Chilling Adventures*... lacks that show's easy wit, and Shipka is no Sarah Michelle Gellar.

Picture: All ten 60-minute episodes are available in 4K HDR, and for the most part looks sumptuous,



although a creative decision to add anamorphic lens distortion when anything eldritch happens quickly becomes irritating. We really don't need the picture go blurry to signpost spooky happenings – especially when we're hankering after UHD detail.

The composition has a 'Scope-style ratio (actually 2.20:1), and there are dark shadows – and rich highlights – aplenty. A mix of physical grue and CG gives it a cosy retro feel. Satan, the old goat himself, looks like an escapee from direct-to-video '80s schlockers, which is a good thing.

Audio: Netflix's soundmix is 5.1 and consistently enjoyable. Set-piece sequences make full use of the soundstage; music tracks thump in the surrounds, violins shriek and startle in the corners of the room, ominous bells toll and LFE thunder rolls. Sonically, it's probably the nearest you'll get to spending the night in a haunted house without leaving your sofa. **SM**



A second season has already been greenlit by Netflix and is in production

HCC VERDICT

Chilling Adventures of Sabrina: Season One

→ Netflix Original

WE SAY: This satisfyingly spooky reinvention of the hit '90s series is worth a look.

Movie: ★★★★★

Picture: ★★★★★

Audio: ★★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★★



→ JAMESTOWN SEASONS 1-2

→ Sky Boxsets

Having disappeared from the satcaster's VOD options earlier this year, both seasons of this historical drama are back to watch in preparation for the debut of a third run in early 2019.

Set in the American colony of Virginia in the early 17th century, *Jamestown* does occasionally get bogged down in the political/societal upheavals of the time. It's well-intentioned in this regard, but is much more successful when it turns its attention to the more personal interactions of its characters.

Key here are its three female leads. Jocelyn (Naomi Battrick), Alice (Sophie Rundle) and Verity (Niamh Walsh) are all new arrivals to the New World, shipped across the Atlantic to marry the men who paid for their transportation. Naturally, this doesn't always lead to domestic harmony – or a happy colony in general.

Add in complex relations with the neighbouring Pamunkey Native American tribe, witchcraft fears

and restless slaves and you have a situation with plenty of dramatic scope.

It's easy to get lured in, with both seasons building to rewarding climaxes, but there's an unevenness to *Jamestown*'s tone; it veers from *Desperate Housewives*-style light comedy to flashes of grim violence (never that grim, though – this isn't an HBO production).

Available in Ultra HD through Sky Q hardware, there's solid eye-candy here. Costumes and sets are rich in detail and it's a more colourful show than you might expect given all the dirt and dust. There's less visual flair during night-time sequences, however; some scenes can feel flat and murky.

A 2.35:1 framing gives the series a cinematic feel that isn't backed up by the largely unambitious sound design, but at least the opening credits theme is fantastic. **MC**



Although set in America, the show is actually filmed on location in Hungary

**Multi-Award Winning Bespoke Cinema Rooms & Family Entertainment Spaces
Throughout Essex, Kent & Surrounding Areas**



Cinema & Media Rooms / Smart Home Automation / Lighting / Design - Visualisation - Install



CEDIA MEMBER



FOLLOW

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE
MUSICALIMAGES.CO.UK/SHOP FOR NEW DEALS
FOLLOW OUR NEW INSTAGRAM PAGE
[MUSICAL_IMAGES](https://www.instagram.com/musical_images) FOR STUNNING IMAGES



THE BEST IN HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Visit our website for amazing deals and to see our beautiful Installation Gallery. Follow us on Instagram too at [musical_images](https://www.instagram.com/musical_images) for new product news and our step-by-step installation picture carousels.

**HIFI • HOME CINEMA • MULTIROOM AUDIO • HOME AUTOMATION
LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS • A/V DESIGN & CONSULTANCY**

Musical Images Showrooms Opening times - 9:30am to 5:30pm. Monday - Saturday. Closed on Wednesdays

126 High Street, Beckenham
Kent BR3 1EB
Tel: 020 866 33 777
beckenham@musicalimages.co.uk

173 Station Road, Edgware
Middlesex HA8 7JX
Tel: 020 8952 5535
edgware@musicalimages.co.uk

www.musicalimages.co.uk
f musical images
i musical_images
t @musical_images



3 times award winner
HOME CINEMA CHOICE
"Best Multiroom Installation"

Missed an issue?

Have you missed a copy of *Home Cinema Choice*? You can now order these online



Issue No.281



Issue No.282



Issue No.283



Issue No.284



Issue No.285



Issue No.286



Issue No.287



Issue No.288



Issue No.289



Issue No.290



Issue No.291



Issue No.292

Order Online:
www.mags-uk.com

Please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of all issues displayed above.



SELECT

→ **GEAR GUIDE** **TELEVISIONS** From entry-level 40in LEDs to flagship 4K monsters
BLU-RAY PLAYERS Which deck rules the roost? **PROJECTORS** It's time to blow up your video!
AV RECEIVERS 5.1, 7.1, 11.2 – we've got all the options covered **SPEAKERS** Killer surround sound setups
for all rooms and budgets **PVRs** Including super-slim Freeview boxes and Sky Q **AND MORE!**



HCC RATINGS KEY...

Outstanding	★★★★★
Above average	★★★★☆
Acceptable	★★★☆☆
Disappointing	★★☆☆☆
Dire	★☆☆☆☆

All prices quoted are approximate and may have changed

TOP 15 Televisions

01

**Samsung QE65Q9FN** → £3,000 ★★★★★

Revised QLED technology and the implementation of a local dimming backlight reap astonishing picture quality rewards with this bright, colourful 4K HDR hero. Great usability and smart platform, too. *HCC #285*

TOP 5 Blu-ray movies

**Deadpool 2 [Ultra HD Blu-ray]**

A larger budget and bolstered cast don't water down the basic 'X-rated X-man' premise of this fun sequel flick. Image quality is outshone by a chaotic, bass-rich Dolby Atmos mix. *HCC #291*

★★★★★

**Solo: A Star Wars Story [Ultra HD Blu-ray]**

There's a murky quality to some of its visuals, but otherwise this spin-off/prequel is a fun addition to the *Star Wars* franchise. Atmos mix is entertaining; extras are lightweight. *HCC #292*

★★★★★

**Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom [Ultra HD Blu-ray]**

A superb 4K HDR image and stonking DTS:X soundmix make this dino sequel a home cinema crowd-pleaser, even if much of the story feels like a rehash of previous ideas. *HCC #292*

★★★★★

**Isle of Dogs**

Stop-motion animation from Wes Anderson with an excellent voice cast and wonderfully surreal story. The BD offers gorgeous 1080p visuals and an effective DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix, but extras are sparse. *HCC #290*

★★★★★

**Avengers: Infinity War [Ultra HD Blu-ray]**

While loaded with characters and narrative threads, this Marvel flick pulls it all off, and arrives on 4K BD (US import) with good – but not great – picture and sound. *HCC #290*

★★★★★

02



Philips 65OLED903 → £3,500 ★★★★★

Take impressive audio from a B&W-designed speaker array, OLED-delivered 4K HDR visuals that outshine the competition, and add a sprinkle of Ambilight, and you get the most exciting display Philips has ever released. HCC #290

03



Panasonic TX-65FZ852 → £3,000 ★★★★★

4K HDR OLED (with HDR10+ support) that offers subtlety and refinement in shades (particularly with colour presentation and near-black handling), making up for a slight lack of dynamic punch. Unobtrusive design, too. HCC #290

04



Samsung QE85Q900R → £15,000 ★★★★★

It's frighteningly expensive and you won't find any native content to play on it, but Samsung's 85in 8K debutant still wows. Ultra bright and an excellent upscaler of 4K sources. An upgrade to HDMI 2.1 is promised. HCC #292

05



LG OLED65E8 → £4,300 ★★★★★

This Dolby Vision-enabled OLED boosts image quality on last year's E7 (it's brighter, for one thing), although its Atmos sonics are a tad less impressive. Tidy design and excellent UI. HCC #287

06



Philips 43PUS6753 → £430 ★★★★★

Sharp, colour-rich, direct-LED images, plus Ambilight and Philips' bespoke SAPHI smart system, make this 43in 4K HDR LCD a smallscreen(ish) dream. Superb option for a second-room/budget setup. HCC #291

07



Sony KD-55AF9 → £3,000 ★★★★★

Pricier than most 55in OLED rivals, but this Master Series Sony has a unique style, effective 'invisible' audio solution, Dolby Vision/Atmos support and lush 4K visuals. Good new Android OS, too. HCC #292

08



Sony KD-55XF9005 → £1,700 ★★★★★

Impressive backlighting, dynamic HDR images and top-quality motion processing are the major draws of this mid-tier Bravia. Android OS still needs improvement, though. HCC #285

09



Samsung QE65Q8DN → £2,900 ★★★★★

Not as bright as Samsung's top-of-the-range Q9 (and with fewer dimming zones) but still an impactful 4K HDR performer. Excellent HD upscaling, and native motion handling is also solid. HCC #291

10



Hisense H75U9A → £3,500 ★★★★★

This 75in LED is the brightest display we've seen, yielding benefits with HDR content, while backlit illumination aids black levels. Sharpness and colour delivery are less impressive, but the price/size ratio is good. HCC #289

11



Loewe Bild 3.55 → £2,800 ★★★★★

Loewe's entry-level 55in OLED TV offers an artful fusion of design and performance (with decent sonics). Not the best selection of integrated smarts, though, and some rivals are cheaper. HCC #283

12



Hisense 55U7A → £800 ★★★★★

FIFA-branded 4K HDR flatscreen that makes up for a lack of HDR brightness through its image clarity and solid black levels. Strong audio and a clutter-free smart platform sweeten the deal. HCC #287

13



TCL 55DC748 → £700 ★★★★★

While this budget UHD LCD can look bright, detailed and colour-rich, its whole-frame dimming engine and absence of motion compensation count against it. The JBL soundbar is a little underpowered. HCC #289

14



Sony KD-55XF8505 → £1,100 ★★★★★

This mid-tier edge-lit Sony set has its strengths, particularly its onboard audio and bright room/bright content playback. But a limited contrast means it never feels overly cinematic. HCC #287

15



Hitachi 75HL16T64U → £1,350 ★★★★★

This 75in megascreen offers a lot of 4K image for not a lot of money. Predictably, picture quality can't match that of big-brand rivals – but the TV holds appeal if you're mainly after an SDR display. HCC #285

TOP 15 Speaker systems

01



Bowers & Wilkins 700 Series 5.1

→£3,800 ★★★★★

This array finds the larger models in the 700 Series proving their mettle with formidable power and precision, an expressive mid-band and detailed highs. Excellent. HCC #285

Starscape Fibre Optic Lighting
CEDIA MEMBER

- * Infinity - modular star ceiling panels for professional installers
- * Custom and off-the-shelf DIY fibre optic kits
- * Comprehensive website with projects and ideas.

Help and advice from our small team of fibre optic enthusiasts

info@starscape.co.uk www.starscape.co.uk 01289 332900



Photo courtesy of UK Home Cinemas



M&K Sound IW150 5.1 →£8,550 ★★★★★

The in-wall IW150 speakers offer the transparency and detail of a professional studio monitor in an enclosure that can vanish. This array adds driver-matched on-wall tripole surrounds and M&K's fearless X12 sub. The result is outstanding. *HCC #289*



Wharfedale DX-2 →£450 ★★★★★

The asking price of this 5.1 system will tell you it doesn't offer the last word in surround sound fidelity, but Wharfedale's package is compact, well made and faultlessly delivers on its home-cinema-on-a-budget promise. *HCC #283*



Monitor Audio Gold 300AV →£7,150 ★★★★★

This big-ticket package excels across the frequency range, offers exquisite design and packs setup flexibility via the dipole/monopole FX surrounds. *HCC #251*



KEF Q Series 5.1.2 →£3,300 ★★★★★

KEF's revamped Q Series now offers Atmos modules for an up-to-the-minute sonic experience. Big, bold-looking speakers. Robust, immersive audio. *HCC #280*



ATC HTS7 5.1 →£3,500 ★★★★★

Brit brand ATC rejigs the driver tech and neutral sound of its SCM range into a wall-mountable, flexible system perfect for discreet AV setups. *HCC #275*



Elipson Prestige Facet 7.2.4 →£3,500 ★★★★★

13 cabinets come together to create a great-value and immersive Dolby Atmos array. Rich in fidelity and neutrality; modern styling is another plus point. *HCC #291*



Q Acoustics 3050i →£1,350 ★★★★★

This update on the previous 3000 series makes subtle performance and styling improvements. The result is an excellent, well-priced, stylish package. *HCC #287*



Monitor Audio Silver 500 5.1 →£3,650 ★★★★★

The new Silver range offers a potent EQ-able sub, sweet design, dipole surrounds and largescale, nuanced sonics. Atmos upfiring models would be nice, though. *HCC #282*



Acoustic Energy 100 Series 5.1 →£1,300 ★★★★★

Acoustic Energy's latest addition scores well on style, ease of install and price, and puts in a consistently entertaining multichannel performance. *HCC #286*



Wharfedale Diamond 11 HCP →£800 ★★★★★

Bookshelf speakers and 10in sub combine in a system that offers mid-range and treble finesse and a healthy dollop of boisterous bass. Fun and affordable. *HCC #279*



Q Acoustics 7000i 5.1 Slim →£1,000 ★★★★★

Consistent tonality and detail retrieval are the standout elements here, joined by a cute, easy-to-accommodate design – particularly the 7060S sub. *HCC #284*



Jamo S Series 5.1.2 →£1,120 ★★★★★

An affordable package with drop-dead gorgeous styling, neat Atmos module integration and involving sonics – but the 8in sub isn't a beast. *HCC #290*



Focal Sib Evo Dolby Atmos 5.1.2 →£1,200 ★★★★★

Enjoyable-sounding and well-priced sub/sat system with Atmos upfiring in front L/R enclosures. Not the smallest 'satellite' speakers around. *HCC #276*



Polk Signature Series 5.1 →£1,450 ★★★★★

Largescale performance from a well-priced floorstanding system with slimmed-down centre enclosure. Upfront and boisterous sound; a great entertainer. *HCC #273*

TOP 10 Projectors



01 Sony VPL-VW760ES → £15,000 ★★★★★

This premium beamer adds laser illumination to Sony's 4K SXRD projection technology, and the results are staggering. It's not super-bright, but images are detailed, vivid and supremely well-balanced. Worthy of flagship status. HCC #283



02 JVC DLA-X5900 → £4,000 ★★★★★

An outstanding performer at this price point. JVC's latest D-ILA model may lack native 4K silicon but its eShift 4K engine shows real improvement and HDR playback has been greatly boosted too. A compelling home cinema PJ. HCC #282



03 Optoma UHD51 → £1,500 ★★★★★

This affordable 4K DLP model adds 3D playback (at 1080p) to its home cinema repertoire, making it an obvious upgrade for stereoscopy fans. Sharp, colour-rich and dynamic visuals. HCC #287



04 Sony VPL-VW360ES → £7,000 ★★★★★

In Sony's 4K range between the laser-based VW760ES and entry-level 260ES you'll find this accomplished beamer. Excellent imagery with both SDR and HDR. Motorised controls. HCC #284



05 Vivitek HK2288 → £2,500 ★★★★★

The Taiwanese brand returns to the UK with a 4K DLP PJ that balances impressive HDR brightness with stable images. Excellent remote control and decent zoom and throw options. HCC #285



06 BenQ TK800 → £1,200 ★★★★★

A lot of enjoyable performance crammed into a compact package. Offers 4K HDR playback, plus 3D, with only a limited black level and occasionally pushed colours counting against. HCC #288



07 Optoma UHZ65 → £5,000 ★★★★★

The asking price here reflects Optoma's addition of laser illumination (yielding improved contrast and far greater 'lamp' life) to the DLP 4K and HDR playback talents of its stablemates. HCC #282



08 Acer VL7860 → £3,500 ★★★★★

Laser 4K DLP projector that misses out on the contrast performance of some models, but undercuts them in terms of pricing. Use the Silent mode for whisper-quiet operation. HCC #284



09 Acer V6820i → £1,500 ★★★★★

Single-chip 4K DLP beamer with support for Alexa voice control (Alexa device required). While this doesn't prove particularly impressive, the PJ's dark-room image quality is decent and the styling superb. HCC #290



10 BenQ W1050 → £500 ★★★★★

There are a few cut corners on this budget DLP 1080p model (no backlight on the remote, no lens shift, a meagre zoom), but overall movie performance is good for the money. HCC #283

Award-winning home cinemas

At Cyberhomes our home cinemas and smart home installations aren't just about the amazing 4K picture and immersive Dolby Atmos sound. We can also implement the lighting, the seating, the room acoustic treatments, the intuitive control system from Savant, Crestron or Control4, and so much more.

For more details call **0333 344 3718** or visit **www.cyberhomes.co.uk/hcc**



Home cinema design and installation • Lighting control systems
• Multi-room audio and video • Home automation

0333 344 3718

hello@cyberhomes.co.uk

www.cyberhomes.co.uk

TOP 10 Blu-ray players



NEW ENTRY

Panasonic DP-UB9000 → £850 ★★★★★

Supporting both HDR10+ and Dolby Vision, and incorporating useful image adjustments, this premium player is at the leading edge of UHD BD playback. The astonishing construction and provision of VOD apps heighten its appeal. HCC #292



Oppo UDP-205 → £1,400 ★★★★★

This pricey, peerless UHD deck flaunts universal disc playback, asynchronous USB input, headphone amp and balanced stereo outs amongst its audiophile features. One for musos, and you'll probably only find it second-hand now. HCC #274



Sony UBP-X800
→ £270 ★★★★★

Sony embraces UHD Blu-ray with a full-width, sturdy design that'll also spin DVD-A and SACD platters. A great all-rounder, but no current Dolby Vision support or word on an update. HCC #274



Sony UBP-X700
→ £250 ★★★★★

A compact player promised a DV update this Summer, the UBP-X700 has a nondescript design, no analogue outs and a stubby remote. But it plays great, and offers SACD support. HCC #284



Cambridge Audio CXUHD
→ £800 ★★★★★

The lack of analogue outputs is a surprise considering CA's heritage, but this universal (and DV-capable) deck sounds sweet over its digital outs. As with Oppo's UDP-203, a MediaTek SoC is used. HCC #279



Panasonic DP-UB420
→ £250 ★★★★★

Hi-res file support and HDR10+ compatibility make up for this deck's lightweight build and basic streaming app provision (no 4K support at the time of our review). Plenty of user tweaks. HCC #291



Panasonic DMP-UB700
→ £300 ★★★★★

Shorn of some of the audiophile niceties of the UB900 (including multichannel analogue outputs), but still a safe pair of hands with your 4K BDs. And at a bargain price. HCC #270



Panasonic DMP-UB300
→ £130 ★★★★★

Great 4K imagery from this bargain deck, but you might prefer to up your budget for the UB700 – no split HDMI, optical/coaxial or Wi-Fi connections here. Half-size design for an easy install. HCC #272



Samsung UBD-K8500
→ £180 ★★★★★

Debut Ultra HD Blu-ray player that finds fans courtesy of its sensible price point (now even lower), connected smarts and eye-catching visuals. Build quality is a little uninspiring. HCC #260



Samsung UBD-M9500
→ £230 ★★★★★

Second-gen 4K player that adds features (mobile BD streaming, 360-degree image support) but removes 3D playback capability. As before, the chassis is curved. UHD discs look pin-sharp. HCC #275

Starscape Fibre Optic Lighting
CEDIA MEMBER

- * Infinity - modular star ceiling panels for professional installers
- * Custom and off-the-shelf DIY fibre optic kits
- * Comprehensive website with projects and ideas.

Help and advice from our small team of fibre optic enthusiasts

info@starscape.co.uk www.starscape.co.uk 01289 332900



Photo courtesy of UK Home Cinemas

TOP 10 AV Receivers/AV Processors

01

**Denon AVR-X6400H** → £2,100 ★★★★★

This receiver's 11 channels of power are joined by Atmos, DTS:X and integrated Auro-3D, plus HEOS multiroom integration, making it peerlessly flexible. Sound delivery is quick-footed and articulate. A superb one-box solution. HCC #280

02

**Arcam AVR850** → £4,500 ★★★★★

High-end seven-channel AVR marrying Class G amplification and Atmos support with talented Dirac Live Room EQ for an excellent performance. Lacks a few feature frills, but 11-channel pre-outs allow full-fat setups. HCC #257

03

**Denon AVC-X8500H**

→ £3,300 ★★★★★

For those who want to go even bigger with their Atmos/DTS:X system, this flagship provides 13 channels of power. Setup can be complex, and there's no FM tuner, but otherwise this is first-class. HCC #285

04

**Yamaha CX-A5200**

→ £2,600 ★★★★★

11-channel processor with MusicCast integration, XLR hookup and a trio of HDMI outs. Atmos and DTS:X support is bolstered by impressive Surround:AI DSP. Flexible and enjoyable. HCC #292

05

**Marantz AV8805**

→ £3,600 ★★★★★

The most affordable 13-channel processor around, the AV8805 combines lean looks, setup flexibility and a musical, detailed sound performance. Uses Audyssey MultEQ XT32 calibration. HCC #288

06

**Sony STR-DN1080**

→ £550 ★★★★★

Sony is back in the AVR game with a first Atmos model that adds worthy phantom rear speaker processing to its 5.1.2 sonics. A few UI niggles don't take much of the shine off an impressive budget buy. HCC #277

07

**Trinnov Altitude16**

→ £13,000 ★★★★★

High-end 16-channel processor dazzles with its Optimizer room/speaker calibration tech. Balanced outputs for compatible amplifiers. Reference-grade sound quality. HCC #287

08

**NAD T 777 V3**

→ £2,500 ★★★★★

Dirac-enabled seven-channel AV receiver (with 11-channel processing). Powerful, even-handed sonics and wonderfully easy to use, but a firmware update is still awaited for DTS:X decoding. HCC #285

09

**Pioneer VSX-933**

→ £470 ★★★★★

An affordable seven-channel AVR where copious music streaming options are joined by a punchy, upbeat home cinema performance. Improved remote and menus, but only one HDMI output. HCC #292

10

**Denon HEOS AVR**

→ £800 ★★★★★

Able to run wireless rears/sub (using HEOS models) and sporting a display-free design, this is a five-channel AVR with a different approach. One for HEOS devotees only. HCC #276

TOP 5 Bonus features

**Xploring Xtro**

Possibly the best thing about Second Sight's Blu-ray for the bonkers, low-budget, cult UK sci-fi *Xtro* is this hilarious and candid hour-long *Making of...* doc. Essential post-movie viewing. HCC #288

★★★★★

**Verhoeven Versus Verhoeven**

A detailed documentary from 2016 celebrating the filmmaker's lengthy and controversial career – you'll find it on Eureka's recent *Flesh + Blood* Blu-ray release. HCC #289

★★★★★

**Ghost Stories: Directors' commentary**

Directing/writing duo Andy Nyman and Jeremy Dyson provide a superb chat track for their spooky anthology flick, highlighting the movie's countless Easter Eggs. HCC #289

★★★★★

**Deadpool 2 commentary**

Star Ryan Reynolds, director David Leitch and writers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick team up for this detail-packed but also light-hearted chat track for the recent superhero sequel Blu-ray release. HCC #291

★★★★★

**All Eyes on Lenzi: The Life and Times of the Exploitation Titan**

Wonderful 84-minute documentary focusing on Italian director Umberto Lenzi, included on 88 Films' new BD release of 1975 flick *Eyeball*. HCC #291

★★★★★

TOP 10 Subwoofers



01 SVS SB-2000 → £800 ★★★★★

This follow up to the SB-1000 offers immense value for money. A mid-sized woofer that imbues Blu-rays with quick, taut and potent LFE, it's a perfect introduction to what a truly good sub can accomplish. *HCC #233*



02 REL No.25 → £6,500 ★★★★★

REL celebrates its 25th anniversary in style with this 15in/1,000W premium concoction that exhibits exhilarating speed and nuance down to serious depths. Big, but beautiful. *HCC #271*



03 Bowers & Wilkins DB1D

→ £3,750 ★★★★★

This sequel to the DB1 moves EQ to an app and changes driver/amp design. Beautifully controlled performance with depth and detail. Gorgeous bodywork. *HCC #277*



04 JL Audio Fathom f212v2

→ £6,500 ★★★★★

A second outing for JL's 2 x 12in monster, with an increase in power (3,600W) and room EQ improvements among the changes. Sounds as good as you'd imagine. *HCC #261*



05 SVS SB16-Ultra

→ £2,500 ★★★★★

A 16in driver and 1,500W amp combine to give SVS's flagship sealed sub real appeal. Goes low but remains tight and fast. App-assisted EQ and operation. *HCC #270*



06 REL HT/1205

→ £700 ★★★★★

A larger (12in) driver and punchier amp than on the HT/1003 increases LFE enjoyment – but still at a bargain price. Lacks a bit of subtlety though. *HCC #290*



07 REL HT/1003

→ £500 ★★★★★

REL targets film fans with a 10in sub that drops its usual simultaneous high/low-level input to hit a new price point. Power and speed are its strengths. *HCC #286*



08 SVS SB-4000

→ £1,800 ★★★★★

Similar in operation and styling to the SB16-Ultra flagship, but smaller and more affordable. Superior DSP results in a real sense of control. *HCC #284*



09 GoldenEar SuperSub X

→ £1,450 ★★★★★

Four drivers squeezed into a relatively compact design and given plenty of push from a 1,400W amp. Standout traits are impact and depth. *HCC #272*



10 KEF Kube10b

→ £600 ★★★★★

The middle option of KEF's new Kube range packs a 10in driver, 300W Class D amp and 56-bit DSP engine to maintain efficient low-frequency control. *HCC #283*

TOP 5 Console games



God of War

An HDR showcase for both PS4 and PS4 Pro (and playable in upscaled 4K on the latter), this action/puzzler is massive in scope and, in the Leviathan Axe, features perhaps the best weapon in gaming! *HCC #286*

★★★★★



F1 2018

HDR grading adds visual allure to Codemasters' latest racing sim, while various tweaks to the career mode loosen the straitjacket approach of previous years and make it easier for novices. Hooray! *HCC #290*

★★★★★



Marvel's Spider-Man

Swing around New York City in this joyous, bright and colourful superhero tie-in. Graphically rich, with intuitive gameplay and fast, free-flowing combat. A suitably epic score completes an excellent all-round package. *HCC #291*

★★★★★



Jurassic World: Evolution

Wanna run your own dinosaur-filled theme park? This addictive and time-stealing movie tie-in lets you do just that. Challenging final levels make up for a lack of variety. Excellent 4K visuals on next-gen consoles. *HCC #288*

★★★★★



Shadow of the Tomb Raider

Lara's back and she means business in this lengthy, stealth-tastic puzzle adventure from Square Enix. The best *Tomb Raider* title yet, and gorgeous to look at. *HCC #292*

★★★★★

TOP 10 Accessories

**KEF R50** → £600 ★★★★★

KEF's Dolby Atmos-enabled reflective modules are a smart choice to beef up a system. Using the company's Uni-Q point source drivers pays dividends, enabling full-range sonics that reach deep into your cinema room. First-rate build. *HCC #252*

**Yamaha WX-AD10** → £150 ★★★★★

Simple to use, unobtrusive add-on that brings MusicCast multiroom/hi-res streaming to legacy AV gear via 3.5mm/phono. Not a bad price – only available in grey, unfortunately. *HCC #274*

**Nvidia Shield Android TV**

→ £180 ★★★★★

The Android-based streamer/gaming box gets a gentle revamp – same silicon, neater design, new features including future support for Google Assistant. Slick and easy to use. *HCC #272*

**Roku Streaming Stick+**

→ £70 ★★★★★

If a simple life is your aim, this content-rich, 4K/HDR-capable dongle from the streaming specialist is your friend. Idiot-proof interface and control. Good price. *HCC #282*

**Amazon Fire TV (2017)**

→ £70 ★★★★★

HDR playback has been added to Amazon's great-value media streamer, although the absence of an Ethernet port does niggle considering its 4K talents. Cluttered UI. *HCC #280*

**Panasonic SC-GA10**

→ £230 ★★★★★

Panasonic partners with Google Assistant for its debut smart speaker, and doesn't forget to focus on sonic power as well as AI fun. Pricier than many rivals, but still appealing. *HCC #284*

**Edifier S350DB**

→ £250 ★★★★★★

Active 2.1 speaker system that's a fine alternative to a soundbar, with good bass integration and effects separation. No HDMI hookup and retro styling, but easy to setup and use. *HCC #291*

**Apple TV 4K**

→ £180 (32GB) ★★★★★★

With Apple's iTunes movie store offering 4K HDR (Dolby Vision) movies at the same price as Full HD downloads, this compact media player (irritating handset aside) is sure to tempt. *HCC #284*

**Synology DS119j**

→ £95 ★★★★★★

Entry-level single-bay NAS (you'll need to add your own HDD) that benefits from Synology's impressive DSM operating system. Quick to get up and running, versatile and smart-looking. *HCC #292*

**Systemline S7 Netlink Music Player**

→ £700 ★★★★★★

Stereo streamer with integrated services including BBC Radio at better-than-usual quality. Installation flexibility makes up for the prosaic design. *HCC #290*

TOP 5 Blu-ray/DVD boxsets

**Predator: 3-Movie Collection [Ultra HD Blu-ray]**

Two great movies and one average one reborn in 4K, with existing extras and audio mixes ported from previous BDs. *Predator* now benefits from a DNR-free approach. *HCC #290*

★★★★★

**The Expanse: Season One**

Some bonus bits would be welcome on this 10-episode Blu-ray boxset, but *The Expanse* remains one of the best sci-fi series around, and the HD visuals and lossless 5.1 mixes impress too. *HCC #291*

★★★★★

**X-Men: 3-Film Collection [Ultra HD Blu-ray]**

Fox digs into its *X-Men* vault for a 4K triple-pack, introducing Wolverine, Magneto *et al.* No remixed audio and some AWOL extras, but the boosted image quality appeals. *HCC #292*

★★★★★

**The Complete Sartana**

Five over-the-top Spaghetti Western flicks from the 1960s/'70s may find a new audience via this solid Blu-ray boxset from Arrow Video. Three audio commentaries are among the extras. *HCC #289*

★★★★★

**Legends of Tomorrow: Complete Third Season**

The latest run for DC's Arrowverse spin-off is a weird, wacky treat – and far more enjoyable and humour-packed than its parent shows. DTS-HD 5.1 mixes are solid, too. *HCC #292*

★★★★★

TOP 10 Soundbars & Soundbases



01 Samsung HW-N950 → £1,500 ★★★★★

The latest and greatest soundbar system to arrive from Samsung's US-based Audio Lab, the HDMI-equipped N950 crafts a dynamic, detailed and immersive 7.1.4 Atmos/DTS:X soundfield without cluttering your room. *HCC #290*



02 Canton DM55 → £240 ★★★★★

Canton's smallest soundbase still delivers big sonic thrills. Twin woofers underpin clean and crisp mids and highs, and build quality is first-rate. Doddle to use. Bluetooth built-in. *HCC #260*



03 Yamaha YSP-5600SW

→ £1,900 ★★★★★

With its 46 drivers (including upfiring) this premium 'bar delivers precisely steered and immersive audio, even of the Atmos variety. Potent wireless sub and 4K-capable HDMI switching sweeten the high-end deal. *HCC #254*



04 Denon HEOS Bar

→ £570 ★★★★★

Multiroom-ready and app-controllable, this premium single-enclosure model offers powerful, detailed and warm sonics in spades. Can be expanded into a 5.1 system with extra HEOS hardware. *HCC #287*



05 Q Acoustics M3

→ £300 ★★★★★

A 4in x 6in woofer is tucked away in the M3's eye-catching angular chassis, ensuring this well-priced soundbar has a full-range performance. Simple to use. Bluetooth streaming. *HCC #271*



06 LG SK10Y

→ £1,200 ★★★★★

High-price but high-performance, LG's Atmos-enabled soundbar system is large in scale, rich in bass and offers 4K HDMI switching. Over 1.4m wide, so won't suit all setups. *HCC #288*



07 Sony HT-ZF9

→ £650 ★★★★★

This 3.1-channel soundbar handles Dolby Atmos streams and promises enveloping sonics via DSP trickery. The result isn't noticeable overhead audio, but a wide, high and exciting performance. *HCC #289*



08 JBL Bar Studio

→ £150 ★★★★★

No subwoofer here, just a fairly compact stereo 'bar' that offers a useful soundstage-widening 'Surround' mode, HDMI ARC connectivity, and a decent performance for the price. *HCC #284*



09 Q Acoustics M2

→ £300 ★★★★★

Easily accommodated in/on AV furniture, and packing HDMI ARC for a simple hookup, this BMR-driver/built-in woofer soundbase impresses with its energetic delivery and price. *HCC #279*



10 Panasonic SC-HTB258

→ £150 ★★★★★

When space is tight, this oh-so compact 'bar' (plus slim sub) will do the job. Bass is well-defined and dialogue strong, but the soundstage is narrow. Connections are HDMI ARC, Bluetooth and optical. *HCC #279*

TOP 5 Back-catalogue Blu-rays



Night of the Demon: Limited Edition

Jacques Tourneur's 1957 supernatural classic gets a devilishly good BD release from Indicator, with three different cuts spread across two discs, plus a mass of extras. *HCC #292*

★★★★★



Candyman: Limited Edition

Some detective work from Arrow Video sees the UK theatrical edit of this Clive Barker adaptation debuting on Blu-ray, in addition to the US cut. Image quality is superb, and there are new and archival bonus bits. *HCC #292*

★★★★★



The Changeling: Limited Ed.

Peter Medak's 1980 ghost story has acquired a cult following, meaning this belated UK BD will be welcomed. Restored visuals, DTS-HD MA audio and extras including a 40-page booklet boost its appeal. *HCC #290*

★★★★★



The Deer Hunter [UHD Blu-ray]

Michael Cimino's slow-burning Vietnam War drama hits 4K with a pleasing HDR10/Dolby Vision grade. This lux set includes the CD soundtrack, booklet, script and plenty of extras. *HCC #291*

★★★★★



12 Monkeys

Bruce Willis and Brad Pitt star in Terry Gilliam's mind-melting time-travel flick, here given a new lease of life on Blu-ray thanks to a director-approved 4K scan of the original 35mm elements. *HCC #292*

★★★★★

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT

Just £19.99*

SAVE
UP TO
37%



Hi-Fi News

13 issues for £19.99
Saving 37%
Full price £31.50



Hi-Fi Choice

13 issues for £19.99
Saving 33%
Full price £29.94



Home Cinema Choice

13 issues for £19.99
Saving 33%
Full price £29.94

Avoid the long queues and treat your loved one with a gift subscription to their favourite magazine. You get to save money, and they get their magazine delivered direct to their door! You could even treat yourself... Don't miss out – subscribe today!

■ Delivered conveniently to your door ■ Choose from a wide range of magazines ■ Greetings card supplied with gift subscriptions

DON'T MISS OUT! OFFER ENDS 31st JANUARY 2018

Order online today
www.mytimemedia.co.uk/XMAS18P3

Or call 0844 243 9023**
and quote reference XMAS18P3

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Offer ends 31st January 2019. *UK print subscriptions offer only. Subscriptions begin with first issue of 2019. MyTime Media collect your data so that we can fulfil your subscription. We may also, from time to time, send you details of MyTime Media offers, events and competitions but you always have a choice and can opt out by emailing us at unsubscribe@mytimemedia.com for fishing titles. We do not share or sell your data with/to third parties. Details you share with us will be managed as outlined in our Privacy Policy here <http://www.mytimemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy>. Please visit www.mytimemedia.co.uk/terms for full terms & conditions.

**Calls are charged at the same rate as standard UK landlines and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances. There are no additional charges with this number. Overseas calls will cost more.



TOP 5 PVRs



Virgin Media TiVo, £subscription

This triple-tuner PVR offers recording flexibility, useful features – you can undelete deleted shows! – and smart TiVo functionality. If you're in a cable area, consider it

★★★★★



Sky Q, £subscription

Sky's new top-tier product offering dazzles with its image-rich user interface, wireless multiroom skills and recording flexibility delivered by the PVR's 12 tuners. Now supports 4K content

★★★★★



Humax FVP-5000T

Revamped menus, faster operation and tweaks to its triple-tuner engine make this the most advanced Freeview Play PVR around – and it doubles admirably as a DLNA player/media jukebox. 500GB/1TB/2TB

★★★★★



Humax DTR-T4000, £subscription

This YouView-based PVR is required to get BT Sport's new Ultra HD channel – available to those with BT fast fibre and a BT TV sub. Easy to use and with 1TB of storage

★★★★★



Manhattan T2-R, £120

The 500GB HDD and twin-tuner spec of this Freeview HD PVR is basic, but Manhattan's new hardware design, user interface (and the price tag) are appealing. Easy to use.

★★★★★

TOP 5 Headphones



Sony MDR-HW700DS, £800

Comfy cans supplied with an HDMI surround processor, enabling multichannel audio to be fed to a virtual 9.1-channel soundstage. The effect is superb – great for late-night listening

★★★★★



Nuraphones, £350

Unusual over-ear/in-ear hybrid cans that measure the acoustic response of your inner ear to fine-tune performance. It's a highly impressive trick, but the design can make these a bit uncomfortable to wear.

★★★★★



1More MK802, £150

Ignore the bling-tastic blue or red finishes and focus on the assured sound performance from these well-priced closed-back cans. Features include wireless Bluetooth and app control (with burn-in mode). Great value

★★★★★



Bowers & Wilkins PX, £330

B&W adds noise-cancelling to the general spec of its previous P7 wireless cans, a welcome update for those seeking uninterrupted listening. Offers a neutral, balanced sound suited to both movies and music

★★★★★



Audio Technica ATH-SR9, £400

45mm drivers and Audio Technica's Midpoint Mount tech deliver wide, deep, spacious sonics. Memory foam padding aids listener comfort; 3m cable should suit most AV setups

★★★★★

TOP 5 Wireless speakers



KEF Muo, £300

Portable Bluetooth speaker that's a cut above much of the competition. KEF's sonic knowhow results in a punchy, dynamic presentation that cherishes lossless rips. Excellent build quality

★★★★★



Yamaha MusicCast 50, £450

New to Yamaha's multiroom stable is this stereo desktop speaker with a clean, balanced delivery, neat aesthetic and control via the brand's rock-solid and well-stocked app.

★★★★★



Dynaudio Music 7, £875

Top-of-the-range multiroom option from Dynaudio, this sizable speaker creates a full-range, detailed soundstage. Music App offers useful adjustments and EQ modes. Inputs include HDMI (ARC)

★★★★★



Airpulse Audio A200, £800

Monitor-style active speakers offering physical and wireless hookups, a premium build and a sweet yet weighty sound delivered by ribbon tweeters and 5.1in midbass drivers

★★★★★



Denon HEOS 5 HS2, £350

The mid-range multiroom speaker gets a second-gen revamp, adding welcome hi-res audio playback and Bluetooth connectivity. Gorgeous looks, boisterous, room-filling sound

★★★★★

HOME CINEMA

Choice

→ IN THE NEXT ISSUE

2018 Movie Awards We round up our favourite Blu-ray and 4K releases of the last year

2019 tech predictions What's in store for home cinema in the next 12 months?

Readers' rooms Inside your picture palaces...

→ YEARBOOK SPECIAL

The finest AV kit of 2018, including: SVS SB-4000

Denon AVC-X8500H Optoma UHD51 Sony AF9

Jamo S Series Panasonic DP-UB9000

PLUS News, software, opinion, installs and more!!

ISSUE
#294 ON SALE
Dec 20

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE – BUT ONLY FOR THE BETTER



AV Avenger

If you're planning to retire your long-serving AV receiver for a slimmer, simpler soundbar solution, stop right now, implores **Steve May**

OVERSIZED AND OVERLY complex, and as fashionable as gout, the AV receiver has fallen from grace. To a casual observer, this once essential home cinema component seems almost purposely Jurassic. While the latest and greatest hardware gets smaller and easier to use, the AVR, at least to those window shopping, looks much the same as it did decades ago.

Small wonder so many favour the soundbar, which solves the problem of thin TV sound without additional home theatre complications – family members don't need in-depth training to use one.

But for all their merit, such slinky all-in-ones don't come close to a full-blown multi-speaker system for genuine cinematic thrills.

Thankfully, salvation awaits. Technology is conspiring to bring AVRs in from the cold. If you were thinking of dumping your dusty receiver, think again. It's time to buy not bin.

You may not have noticed, but Netflix and Amazon Prime Video now offer programmes in Dolby Atmos audio. Most viewers won't be benefiting, as they'll be watching these shows via embedded apps on TVs that don't have the audio talents to make anything of the codec. However, the same sets which harbour these codecs (principally from LG and Sony) can pass them out using Dolby Digital+ over HDMI into an Atmos AVR – and thanks to improvements in codec efficiency, Dolby Atmos over Dolby Digital+ can sound pretty delightful.

AVRs have also, finally, got their 4K act together, with new models making all HDMI inputs UHD compatible as standard. You can plumb in all your shiny new UHD sources, from set-top box to games console, and enjoy the full 2160/60p benefits offered by UHD. Even better, a select number of models are offering eARC (Enhanced Audio Return Channel)

over HDMI, which will ensure future compatibility with next-gen audio broadcast improvements due in the next few years.

Giving voice to AVRs

Voice control is also providing another reason to fall back in love with these incredible hulks. You can't move for smart speakers that have a running dialogue with either Alexa or Google Assistant. Now specific skills are allowing the modern receiver to integrate with a wider smart home ecosystem.

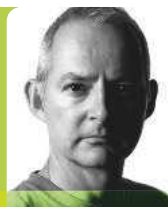
Yamaha has added Alexa voice control to its MusicCast wireless platform, making all its (new) networked AVRs voice controllable. The MusicCast Smart Home skill supports a preset selection of voice commands that you might typically use. Denon is also supporting voice integration – its 2018 Atmos models include support for Amazon Alexa via the HEOS Home Entertainment skill. With it you can ask Alexa to play music from Spotify or Amazon Music, switch inputs, and adjust the volume. The AVR has become smart enough to be user-friendly.

Adding an Amazon Echo Input brings wider benefits. This biscuit-thin alternative to the Echo Dot sheds a speaker but brings Alexa curation and conversation to any analogue input you want to add it to. If you've not tried this, it's a game-changer. I've a NAS full of hi-res files, but the way I casually navigate music is now almost entirely voice driven, shouting out requests like a drunk on karaoke night. (Be aware that the Google Home Mini doesn't have a minijack output, so can't be used this way).

Far from facing redundancy, I'm predicting the AVR is heading for resurgence in 2019. Your New Year's resolution should be to think big, not slim ■

Have you considered replacing an AVR setup with a soundbar? Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com

Steve May's next tip for AVR makers is to stop labelling HDMI inputs as 'DVD' and to put speaker terminals on the front for easy access



PHILIPS

OLED+ 903



There's OLED and there's OLED+



- + Sound by Bowers & Wilkins for audio that lives up our OLED standard.
- + Second generation of P5 picture processor for an even punchier picture.
- + Room-filling Ambilight to take the action beyond the screen.

OLED+

The difference is real.

Length and bandwidth do matter...

Introducing our new Pearl, Forest, and Cinnamon Active HDMI cables. These new models reliably pass HDMI 2.0 4K+HDR data up to 15m, while sounding and looking just as gorgeous as their shorter passive siblings.

For more than 30 years, AudioQuest has been designing and building digital cables that do less damage to the source signal, thereby preserving data and minimizing the noise that would otherwise compromise the electronics. We haven't always predicted the next great technology or digital interface, but the experience is constantly informing our work and leading to cleaner, clearer, more naturally beautiful sound.

The great care, advanced engineering, and holistic priority system that make every passive Pearl or Diamond HDMI such a success is just as beneficial to our new Pearl, Forest, and Cinnamon Active HDMI cables.



audioquest®